

S.I.F.D. News

SEPT 1997



SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCING

EDITOR: Lily Avery (Mrs.), 16 Willow Drive, Little Common, Bexhill-on-Sea,
East Sussex TN39 4PX. Tel: 01424 845866.

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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 Caroline Thomas and shows a gentleman
from Engelberg, Switzerland.

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CHAIRPERSON: Jeanette Hull (Miss), 24 The Homefield, London Road, Morden,
Surrey SM4 5AS. Tel: 0181 640 5267.

SECRETARY: Alison Scrimshaw (Mrs.), 22 Sherwood Park Road, Sutton, Surrey
SM1 2SQ. Tel: 0181 642 3385.

TREASURER: Judith Payling (Mrs.), Rosebank, 56 Quickley Lane, Chorleywood,
Rickmansworth, Herts. WD3 5AF.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY & GROUPS LIAISON OFFICER: Alan Morton, 26 Durham Road, Harrow, Middx. HA1 4PG.
Tel: 0181 427 8042.

PUBLICITY OFFICER: George Sweetland, 28 Hayes Court, Camberwell New Road,
London SE5 0TQ. Tel: 0171 701 3785.

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S.I.F.D. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The A.G.M. will take place on 7th December 1997. Motions should be proposed
and seconded and should be received by the Secretary (Alison Scrimshaw, address
above) on or before the last day of September. Motions that involve constitutional
change or proposals for honorary membership must be received by that date for
inclusion on the agenda. Other motions can be accepted from the floor during
the meeting, at the Chairperson's discretion.

We would also like to hear from anyone who is interested in joining the
Committee for the year 1997/98.

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Please notify the Membership Secretary if you change your address.

HUGH WOOD

All of us at Woodvale were shocked, saddened and surprised when we heard about Hugh's death. I am sure a lot of people in the Society are feeling just the same. Whilst everyone in the Society is helpful to Woodvale, Hugh was especially so. Early on in our acquaintance with Merton, Hugh just "adopted" us. At events such as the Folk Safari, where we brought the families along, Hugh was always very good with the children, sometimes spending more time with them than the grown-ups!

Despite our long association with Hugh, we had never asked him to be a guest M.C. at one of our Dances. I'm sure it never occurred to him, nor would it have bothered him if it had, but it bothered us and so we asked him to be a guest M.C. last year. We were very pleased when he said Yes but, Hugh being Hugh, he kept maintaining that the privilege was entirely his. He was even surprised that we wanted to pay him as well!

Whilst it is a very sad loss to dancing, the Society and Woodvale, we are of one mind in that at least he died doing what he enjoyed most - dancing.

Hugh, old friend - Adieu.

DAVID MCKIE, on behalf of
Woodvale I.F.D.G.



RESIDENTIAL DANCE COURSES FOR SPRING 1998

- a) 27th-29th/30th March 1998. BULGARIAN DANCING with Eddy Tijssen at Malhamdale. This splendid venue has an indoor heated swimming pool and all rooms are en-suite. Details are not quite finalised at the time of writing but there may be a second teacher. Dancers will be able to choose between half-day or full-day courses with either both or one of the teachers. It will also be possible to stay either for the weekend or for three days (Friday evening to Monday afternoon). The dance hall is larger than venues that we have used previously, so it should be possible to give more people their first choice.
- b) 24th-26th April 1998. ISRAELI DANCING with Fiona Howarth at Freshwater Bay Isle of Wight. Fiona's previous weekends have been both popular and enjoyable and she will be back at Freshwater Bay to impart some more of her gems to us. Freshwater Bay house is in a delightful setting overlooking the bay and not far from the Needles and Alum Bay. En-suite rooms are available.

Both venues are excellent locations for walking and sightseeing for non-dancing friends and family. Accommodation is in comfortable single and twin-bedded rooms. Full board is provided, with a plentiful choice of food, and all the facilities of the house and grounds are available to residents. For details and a booking form, send s.a.e. to me at 115 Chetwynd Road, London NW5 1DA.

CATHY MEUNIER



MUSIC. Three English tunes from Wilf Horrocks this month on p.11. If you would like the music for any particular dance, please let Wilf know, on 0181 642 3629.

PEMBROKESHIRE INTERNATIONAL FOLKDANCE GROUP

The Group have once again enjoyed a busy year. We thought that after last year's celebration things would have quietened down, but it was not to be. We had our usual Christmas Party, followed by our annual non-dancing Dinner in January. Not quite so many demonstrations this year, but two are worthy of note.

The first was at the Day Centre in Haverfordwest just before Christmas when, due to my being poorly, the group had to go, for the first time, without me. My husband, Vic, on the tape, and "the Group" in charge, it was a great success as comments and photos have proved. The other was on 12th July when we were invited to Whitland, a nearby town, along with "Glan Cleddau", our local Welsh folkdance group, to meet a Breton group of dancers and musicians called Korollerian-Ar-Vro, "Les Danseurs du Pays". They were on a short visit to the U.K. The group was formed fifteen years ago and has a membership of 120 with a display team of 32, and they perform suites of dances from at least six different areas of Brittany, all traditional including the music, with no modern instruments. It was a wonderful evening with each of the groups, Bretons, Welsh, International, giving displays of dances then involving everyone in appropriate social dances. Our own display on this occasion was of Israeli dances and our social offering came from U.S.A., Russia and Czechoslovakia. For us, the highlights were the Bretons - not a very young group but their energy belied their age. At the end of the evening Whitland Mayor presented us with the town plaque - an honour indeed.

Other special events for P.I.F.D. have been the affiliation of our group to the S.I.F.D. and the signing up of more individual members. Another was converting one class night in April to accommodate a wheelchairred guest. Dawn is only 23 and suffers severely from M.S. and can no longer feed herself, let alone propel herself around, but her spirit is not lacking. With plenty of volunteer pushers, Dawn took part in many of the dances including Ersko Kolo, Nottingham Swing, Sicilian Tarantella, Oige Ja Vasembra and even Hammersmiths. What a night to remember. A P.I.F.D. member video'd the occasion and a few weeks ago held a Barbecue and video evening to see the results. It was laughter all the way, as Cynthia and Roy Lewis, who were with us for the evening, will be able to tell you.

As I write, the class is winding down until mid-September. Who knows what the next twelve months will bring? One thing does seem likely and that is that several members may come to York in '98. See you then, if not before.

SUE CLARK
and members of P.I.F.D.



ANOTHER ANNIVERSARY

It was really good last year to celebrate the S.I.F.D.'s 50th anniversary, especially the 50th Anniversary Dance that rounded the year off. Well, down here in the wilds of Kent, we have our own anniversary coming up. Although we are much younger than the S.I.F.D., Woodvale International Folkdance Group will be celebrating its 30th anniversary year in 1998.

Being that much younger, we are, like so many other youngsters, impatient, so consequently we will be having our anniversary dance much earlier in the year - on Saturday, 25th April 1998. Make a note of the date in your diaries. More details will appear towards the end of this year.

DAVID MCKIE

The weather was astonishingly good to the Eisteddfod this year. As we know, most of Britain was grey and miserable in early July, especially in Wales where it rained continuously for days, but at the weekend before the 8th it began to clear and the sun shone down on the Pavilion.

The opening concert unfortunately, once again, did not feature a dance company. The two contrasting choirs, both with world-wide reputations, were nevertheless enjoyed by the largely choral-orientated audience. The King's College choir are superb classical singers but I found their programme lacked contrast. The Adventist choir, which I feared might be "happy-clappy", were very restrained, sang beautifully and were well received.

The "off" for the Eisteddfod proper, for we folkies at least, was sounded at 9 a.m. on the following day in the Town Hall, with the preliminaries for the Folk Music Competition, which this year was somewhat prolonged. The entries from Russia and the Ukraine seemed to be almost unending, even though a further number who had entered did not appear. It was therefore a very long competition, and I had only just enough time for a coffee and a sandwich before rushing to the Pavilion for the finals and the following Adult Folkdance Groups Competition.

Folk Music - Soloists.

A Lithuanian, playing the birbyrne, an end-blown pipe with a horn bell, a larger version of the Welsh pibroch, was accompanied by a piano which, I imagine, did not have the adjudicators' approval. He did, however, give a fine performance. Next, a Romanian cimbalom player, who was very competent but was lacking in that extra something. Two young Russian soloists followed, each accompanied by their teachers(?) on the piano.

The Norwegian musician was an excellent performer on his three chosen instruments - a ram's horn pipe, a jew's harp and an alpenhorn. I and others to whom I spoke would have given him a place in the first three.

The girl bandura player from the Ukraine was also talented but perhaps less versatile. Her instrument is a curious mixture of zither and violin, quite large and with a system of levers to change key. She was followed by a local man on the accordion, two Ukrainian soloists, one on the violin and the other on flute and pipe, and lastly a Welshman on the classical harp.

Groups

The first to appear were "Ententin", six musicians from Croatia, playing several instruments including tambura, tamburica, gaida, double pipe, double bass and an old traditional bowed instrument, the Ŭijera. They made a wonderful sound, very danceable. A second group from Croatia came next. They were part of the Zagreb Ensemble. Younger on average, they gave a satisfying performance on their tamburas, tamburicas, guitar and double bass, but not as exciting as the earlier group.

Four members of "Castiard" from the Forest of Dean, with fiddle, recorder, clarinet and concertina, playing lovely traditional airs, not the awful superannuated pop tunes favoured by some English bards, gave an enjoyable performance. The all-girls Latvian ensemble "Tēiksmā" came next, with four cimbalom-type of instruments (I was not close enough to be certain of this) and two portable zithers supported by straps across the player's shoulders for their first choice, and, for their second, two changed to harp and flute. Singing was an integral part of both items. A well-performed and attractive effort.

A Russian group next, led by a cheerful little man who has appeared for the past several years and surely deserves some award for his persistence and good humour. The Sardinian quintet, with pipes, drum and a long-necked bowed instrument specific to the island, produced a sound which is unique in European music. A Ukrainian trio of violin, cimbalom and accordion was the last item.

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The three groups selected for the finals on stage were the Croatians ("Ententin"), the Latvians ("Teiksma") and the Sardinians from Salesiano. The adjudicators awarded them 93, 94 and 96 respectively.

Adult Folkdance Competition

In contrast to the Folk Music Competition, this was unusually short. Of the 23 groups in the programme, 8 failed to appear, which led to some disruption in the order of appearance.

Latvia, Riga, "Vektors". A young group of eight couples performed beautifully their two items, "Gatves Deja", a dance with simple walking step but creating complex patterns, and "Skalu Speles", a flirting dance involving the use of sticks and culminating in the girls making the boys jump over them and chasing them off the stage. Very attractive in their varied costumes, they were awarded 83 marks.

India (Punjab), Patalia, "Heritage". This was an all-male group from a college founded to preserve local traditions and they gave us two vigorous and lively items. A very happy party, dressed in costumes of bright colours, they were fine dancers and completely authentic. Music was provided by a drum, double pipe and three "shakers". 92 marks (third).

South Africa, Soweto, Choral Society. Here the vocal accompaniment was an important element. The eight male dancers used their spears and shields to great effect to invoke the martial nature of Zulu culture. 90 marks.

N.Ireland, "Loughgiel Dancers". These are regular visitors also, and as such were warmly welcomed. The four men and twelve girls performed the "Ulster Weavers" and the "Bonfire Dance" (in a circle, presumably round the fire) - two traditional dances from the region. 87 marks.

Botswana, Lobotse, "Boikago Choral". A small group of three men and three girls danced to the chanting of a much larger choir, and the programme states their two dances were "Bora Ngwedi" and "Mmaseboledi Bolela". Their style of dance was quite unlike that of the Soweto group as their movements were more or less confined to stamping in various forms and different rhythms. 88 marks.

Sardinia, Selargius, "Saesiano". Eight couples, the men in sombre black and white contrasting with the women in warm reds and golden yellows and resplendent in ethnic jewellery, danced "Is Arroddas" first, to the simple music of an accordion and triangle. This is a harvest dance and has a tricky figure, with the men and women forming "stars" which interleave with each other like cogs in a machine - a mill perhaps? With the addition of a guitarist, six couples gave us "Ballu Sardu Campidanese". Their technique is superb; the seemingly simple steps, danced in very tight lines and circles, were completely together in time and style. 89 marks.

England, Forest of Dean, "Castiard". Dressed in country working clothes of the 1900s, they danced "The Triumph", a 17th century longways, and in two eightsomes "The Moonrakers" (i.e. smugglers). This last had some interesting figures but both items were a little ragged in execution although thoroughly bucolic in spirit. 83 marks.

Spain, "Palencia (old castle) Grup Danzas". From Central Spain, this was a particularly fine performance. The region is off the tourist track, so the costumes are unfamiliar, the men in dark brown knee breeches, gaiters, and waistcoats with red cummerbunds and small round black hats, and the girls in various styles of dress but all with heavy, long skirts in dark reds, greens and yellows. Some were caught up at the bottom of the skirt and appeared to be attached to the hair. The Pilgrimage dance for couples in a circle seemed not to be especially Spanish in feeling, perhaps showing more Northerly

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influences. The second item, a "Round Dance" was much faster, with jota-like steps and the group's castanets rattling away like mad. From time to time in both dances the men tried to flick up the girls' skirts - on a Pilgrimage?! But I suppose things are different there. 93 marks (second).

Croatia, Zagreb, Folkdance Ensemble. This entry consisted of two entirely separate groups which, added together, must have been well beyond the specified total number of 20. The first item was an all-girls group in everyday dress with a dance from Razanac, which was said to demonstrate the strength of the girls and hence their suitability for marriage. Preceded by a song, the dance was led by the Kolovoda (caller) and was silent except for the calls and the steady rhythm of the dancers' feet. Similar to last year's dance from Glamoc, it was a fascinating item. The second group performed a dance from Medimurje, a region close to the Hungarian border, and showed many influences in costume and style from that country. They were accompanied by a six-piece tamburica band. 89 marks.

Republic of Ireland, Co.Kerry, "Listowel Dancers". These very skilled dancers also make regular appearances at the Eisteddfod, and they presented two contrasting dances, the "Haymakers' Jig" and a quadrille, the "Kerry Polka Set". 86 marks.

Romania, Targoviste, "Urmasii Lui Vlad Tepes D1". This entry began with a girls' dance in the costumes of the region near Pleosti, predominately in yellow and black. Their slow, graceful style contrasted with the men's ritual dance "Calusari". This is a fast and vigorous dance. I felt the six men and the leader were good but not outstanding. I have seen better performances of the dance and it certainly should not be presented in a "staged" manner. 82 marks.

Ukraine, Kharkov, "Vechornythi". The two dances of this group were "Vesnanyi Khorovod" and "Pleskach". Although the item was choreographed, it was much less so than some of the other groups and was fairly unobtrusive. Another plus, in my view, was that the men were not expected to perform the highly athletic feats usually included and which are more at home in cabaret acts. They were, I think, undermarked at 82.

England, Bacup, "Britannia Coconut Dancers". This very traditional group, with blackened faces and little red and white skirts, were somewhat out of time in both their "Garland Dance" and "Coconut Dance" but Roy Clarke has already pointed the probable reason for this. (The evening concert showed them at their usual high standard, and the audience was much taken with their young mascot). 80 marks.

Lithuania, Panevezys, "Pynimelis". I appreciate the difficulties under which the adjudicators are expected to work but I felt this group deserved a higher placing. The two items, "Blezdingele", a handkerchief dance for girls, and "A Bast Shoe", a cheerful game dance for the men, were both well performed, and their lovely costumes alone deserved more marks than the modest efforts of the Irish teams. 80 marks.

Basque Country (Spain), St.Sebastian, "Dantza Taldea". Ending on a high note, this was undoubtedly the winning group. The eight men, in black knee breeches, berets and red waistcoats, gave us a truly wonderful hoop dance. Fast and aggressive, with the Basque men's typically high kicks, it became almost frantic at the finish. A whirling mass of men, weaving and ducking but still keeping their precise footwork, was a joy to watch. The girls used a different type of hoop, taller than themselves. At one point, alternate girls held the upright of their neighbours' hoops while they danced away from the circle. Here again, the figures were difficult but their movements were faultless. The pipe and tabor band complemented the dances perfectly. 94 marks (first).

Naren Kotajan's preamble to the adjudication stressed the contributions of the

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English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish national dance bodies as well as the S.I.F.D. to the preservation of folk dancing traditions. He also warned of the danger of the debilitating effect of commercialisation of various kinds on those traditions and the real value of folk art. Finally, he paid tribute to the Eisteddfod's commitment to those values.

The results of the Folk Song Groups competition were: Zagreb, Croatia, 181; Poland 171; Lithuania 169.

GEORGE SWEETLAND

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Lily,

I feel I have to write following your information last month about the Britannia Coconut Dancers from Bacup, and Granada T.V.

Over the border here in Yorkshire, we are quite used to seeing Morris sides etc. in varied costumes. However, I am enclosing a 2-page advertisement from the Radio Times which has appeared several times in the edition we buy here in Yorkshire. The "Flag Crackers" of Craven have always "blackened up" as far as I know and are very popular locally (note the fantastic headgear - eat your heart out, Carmen Miranda!). There have never been any complaints I have heard, or read, about their music, performance, costume or "faces", and we live in one of the most racially aware districts in the country.

Yours,

RACHEL NOVAK
88 Legrams Lane, Bradford,
Yorks BD7 2AH

Ed.Note: Rachel has enclosed an advertisement showing the very colourful(!) "Flag Crackers" dancers from Skipton wearing beribboned costumes, long bead necklaces and gorgeous headdresses of fruit, flowers, feathers, and completely blackened faces.

Dear Lily,

Karin and I read with great surprise in the August SIFD NEWS that Tilut-Tilut has become a Lithuanian dance now. Not so - IT IS AN ESTONIAN DANCE. I taught Tilut-Tilut at Carlyle School and later in Swansea. There are still people about who might remember it. Therefore, we would be most grateful if you could correct it in the next SIFD NEWS.

AILI EISTRAT
6 Manor Gardens, Merton Park,
London SW20 9AB

Ed.Note: Thank you, Aili, for pointing out the error. I remember very well dancing Tilut-Tilut with you at Swansea. Would all members please take note and I have asked Wilf to amend his records. Please accept our apologies.

BALKANPLUS, 13th September 1997 at Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Road, London N.W.1. 6.00 to 10.30 p.m. £3.00. M.C.s: Madeleine Chapman, John Riley and Sally Fletcher.

We extend a big welcome to our three M.C.s this month at the start of our great autumn programme. Please note that the Dance will start at 6.00 p.m. with a revision of some of the dances which may be unfamiliar and which will be included in the main evening's entertainment. This extra session is absolutely free and is a wonderful springboard to the commencement of the new season.

Don't forget that a spare belt might be useful. This is also a good time to purchase your season ticket for the year for £25.00, a considerable saving for regulars, which also has benefits on special occasions, and which are obtainable at the door. T-shirts in black, green and burgundy will also be on sale at the very reasonable price of £6.50. XL size in burgundy and green are now sold out.

Many thanks to all those who supported our Dance in July with "Popeluc", "Dunav" and the Romanian group on their way home from Llangollen. This was an enormous success and really raised the roof with all the musicians and dancers joining together to create an unforgettable evening.

The next Balkanplus will be on 11th October.

FRANCES HORROCKS



INTERNATIONAL/ENGLISH BARN DANCE, 27TH SEPTEMBER 1997

On 27th September there will be a combined International and English Dance at Cecil Sharp House suitable for dancers of all abilities, a joint effort by E.F.D.S.S. and S.I.F.D. The evening is planned as an introduction to the various kinds of dancing that take place at Cecil Sharp House. No previous experience is necessary and there is no need to bring a partner. The M.C.s for the evening will be Anne Leach leading the International Dancing and Brenda Godrich leading the English/American Dancing. The programme will also include a taste of Irish Set Dancing, a bit of Scottish Dancing, and perhaps a little Cajun, so it should be a lively and enjoyable evening. Live music will be provided by "Cloudburst". The Dance will be upstairs in the Kennedy Hall from 8.00 to 11.00 p.m.

Announcements of the Dance in several sizes will be available at the September "First Sunday" Dance, so please take a supply to distribute to friends, neighbours, strangers and others who might possibly be interested, and to post at your local library or other place of prominence. Our marketing research has shown that S.I.F.D. members are our most effective way of spreading the word. It should be an enjoyable evening for experienced dancers as well as beginners. If you need additional information or posters, please call me on 0181 340 4683.

CASPAR CRONK



All material for the October issue of SIFD NEWS must reach the Editor IN WRITING by 17th September. Please write in BLOCK CAPITALS all names of people, places and dances, unless typewritten.

TURKISH CASTANETS - WHO CAN HELP?

Looking at old paintings and engravings, I notice that the dancers during the Ottoman Empire did not use the round metal finger cymbals we know today, nor the wooden spoons used for some Turkish folk dances, but a kind of wooden clappers. They are not like the Spanish castanets, but seem to be made of two connected rectangular pieces of wood in each hand. Can I appeal to our Balkan dance experts for help and information? Are these wooden clappers still in use in folk dances, and if so, where? Is anybody teaching how to dance with them, or can you describe some of the dance movements? Finally, how can I get some?

CHRISTINE HALL (01580 850687)



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

Sept.7th M.C.s: Central London Folkdance Group

Oct. 5th M.C.s: Audrey Whiteley and Mona Graham

7.00 to 10.00 p.m. Admission £4.00 for S.I.F.D. members, £5.00 for non-members.



WHAT'S ON IN SEPTEMBER

Sept.13th S.I.F.D. APPALACHIAN CLOGGING DAY COURSE. See below.

Sept.13th BALKANPLUS. See p.9.

Sept.27th INTERNATIONAL/ENGLISH BARN DANCE See p.9.



S.I.F.D. DAY COURSE - APPALACHIAN CLOGGING

13TH SEPTEMBER 1997, CECIL SHARP HOUSE

There will be an S.I.F.D. Day Course on Appalachian Clogging on 13th September 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. at Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, Camden, London N.W.1. (Nearest Underground: Camden Town, 'Bus 274). The teacher will be Rosie Davis and live music will be provided by Rick Townend. Rosie is a very experienced teacher, having led workshops for all levels of dancers. She has also done English Clog dancing, so with the addition of live music it should be an exciting day. The instruction will be suitable for all levels of ability, and no partner is needed. Tickets will be £7.00 for S.I.F.D. members, £9.00 non-members. For additional information, ring Caspar Cronk on 0181 340 4683.