

S I E D W E

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SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCING

Internet website: www.sifd.org

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The typing is done by Lily Avery. The printing, packaging and posting is done by Dalila Heath.

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The cover this month was produced by Simon Guest from a snap taken in Poland. See Betty Harvey's article on pp. 7 & 8.

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S.I.F.D. DAY COURSE - POLISH

<u>Place:</u> Trefusis, Cecil Sharp House	<u>Date:</u> Saturday, 8th September
<u>Time:</u> 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.	<u>Price:</u> £6.00 for S.I.F.D. members £8.00 for non-members

Tutor: Tony Latham

Tony has kindly agreed to teach us some Polish dances. They will be couple dances from an area called Cieszyn and I am told that the dances will be a variety of both easy and more complex dances to suit everyone. Come along and join us even if you are coming on your own as there will always be a partner to dance with. See you there.

HELLEN EZRA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Lily,

Peggy and I were surprised and rather amused to read of Diki Gleeson's regret that so few S.I.F.D. members were at the Llangollen Eisteddfod. In fact, there were about a dozen from the West Midlands alone. We also met several others from Manchester, Bristol and the London area. We even encountered Diki herself but doubt whether she recognised us. This, of course, is the nub of the problem. What Diki meant was that she saw very few people that she recognised as S.I.F.D. members. In the old days most of the Society lived in the London area and met up regularly, thus knew each other by sight at least. Nowadays, with groups all over the country, only the leading lights tend to know each other.

Some years ago a newly-elected Chairman of the S.I.F.D. asked me whether I had been in the Society very long. When I replied, "About forty years", she looked rather stunned. I have no doubt that other "old timers" who rarely visit London have had similar experiences. Equally, we see names in the "NEWS" that we cannot put a face to - even members of the Committee.

We have no idea what the answer is. At one time weekends gave us a chance to meet members from other areas but these are now rare occasions, more's the pity.

Yours sincerely,

ROY "OSCAR" HAYCOCK
74 Cowleigh Bank, Malvern,
Worcs. WR14 1PH

Ed.Note: Maybe we ought to revert to wearing our S.I.F.D. badges - bronze, silver, gold (even green & gold!). Also, do you remember our car badges? Metal, no less, for our badge bars! We could then salute each other as AA officers used to do!

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Dear Lily,

G.D.Towner queries in his further letter in the August "NEWS" the reasons behind National Folkdance Companies touring our stages here. I can speak for the Polish State-promoted "Mazowsze" and "Slask", although not for any others.

Victor Hochhauser first brought "Mazowsze" over here in the early 60s. He thought their dancing would be something new for the British public, exciting and colourful. He was right and they were hugely successful. The Polish government welcomed this and their subsequent visits for the simple reason that it earned for it some much needed Western currency.

I had close contacts with this Company both here and in Poland (less with "Slask") and know the dancers themselves earned very little money. Their other reward was foreign travel - not possible for most Poles under their communist regime. I don't believe any other considerations came into the matter on the part of the government than the commercialisation of their National Folkdance as much as possible.

BETTY HARVEY
30 Regent Square, London
E3 3HQ

NORWEGIAN FOLK DANCE AND NATIONALISM

In my study of the possible role of nationalism in the growth of European Folk Dance Movements, I now examine Norway.

According to Krogsaeter (ref. Note 1), Hulda Garborg and Klara Semb initiated the revival of Norwegian folk dancing towards the end of the 19th century and into the beginning of the 20th. Hulda Garborg was interested in restoring the song-dance. Klara Semb toured the villages and valleys to collect folk dances. Both published instruction manuals (Note 2). Although their initial reasons for doing this work are not clear to me, they certainly later saw the Folk Dance Movement as a tool in a National Revival. First, a little history is necessary!

In the 400 years to 1814, Norway was united with Denmark, essentially under Danish rule. Danish was the official language of the Administration, and indeed also of the Church. Nevertheless, dialects of the original Norwegian language continued to be spoken in the valleys and rural areas. Norway was actually then linked to Sweden by the 1815 Act of Union (Note 3) but this was a much looser association. Nevertheless, it was bitterly opposed by many, and the seeds for a Norwegian National Revival were sown. This required seeking out and bringing to the fore customs, traditions and other such cultural elements that belonged particularly to Norway, and therefore could be used to project Norway as Norwegian rather than, say, Danish or Swedish. The rural Norwegian dialects were thus seen as central to a National Revival, being seen as a genuine continuation from the true Norwegian past. Thus Nynorsk (New-Norwegian) was created mid-19th century and in 1885 the Norwegian Parliament accepted Nynorsk as having equal status as the existing official language, Bokmal.

Hulda Garborg realised the close association between folk song, music, dance, costume etc. and Nynorsk. All issued from the same source, viz. the country folk, the genuine Norwegians. She therefore introduced her dance teaching into the Country Youth Club (Bondeungdomslaget) of Oslo, which had been set up to promote Nynorsk. Klara Semb continued this work with the same idealistic aims.

Krogsaeter notes that though many other groups, not involved in promoting Nynorsk, now regularly practise and promote Norwegian dances, no dance has yet (=1968) been set to texts in Bokmal.

So, we have the situation that whatever the original motivation for recovering the dances, their subsequent use was to help promote a Norwegian National Revival. But how genuine were the various recovered elements as representative of the Norwegian people?

From reading through Krogsaeter's book, one gets the feeling that it is a bit of a patchwork of original and recreated material. Thomas Erikson, a Norwegian Social Anthropologist, is more forthright (Note 4). He is most damning. He notes that it was the urban middle classes that travelled to remote villages and valleys in search of "authentic" Norwegian culture and brought back elements that they presented as authentic expressions of Norwegian-ness. National symbols were created. He states, "In many cases the so-called ancient, typically Norwegian customs, folk tales, handicrafts and so on were neither ancient, typical nor Norwegian". And he continued ".....and many of the 'typical folk costumes' which are worn at public celebrations were designed by nationalists in the 20th century. Most of the customs depicted as typical came from specified mountain valleys in South Norway". These observations mirror my more general thoughts.

Note 1. "Folk Dances of Norway" by J.Krogsaeter (publ. Johan Grundt Tanum Forlag, Oslo. Eng.trans. 1968). Although published in a series entitled "Tokens of Norway", it is an extremely objective handbook, giving down-to-earth facts on the pioneers, the dances, the instruments, costumes, the revival, books, clubs etc.

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- Note 2. Possibly still available? I obtained the following two by K.Semb in 1963:
"Norske Folkedansar I. Danseviser", 8th edition (1961)
"Norske Folkedansar II. Rettleiing om Dansen", 5th edition (1956)
Both published by Noregs Boklag, Oslo.
- Note 3. Arising from the machinations of the European Powers after the defeat of Napoleon, Norway was handed over to Sweden because of the help that Denmark had given to Napoleon.
- Note 4. "Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives" by T.H.Eriksen (Pluto Press, London, 1993). A difficult theoretical study. Mostly irrelevant to our cause but does contain some two or three pages on Norwegian Nationalism, from which the above was extracted.

G.D.TOWNER

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ISRAELI DANCE COURSE WITH FIONA HOWARTH AT BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER

30TH NOVEMBER TO 2ND DECEMBER 2001

Over the first weekend in December, Fiona Howarth will be teaching Israeli folk dancing in the delightful Cotswold village of Bourton-on-the-Water. This residential weekend has become an almost annual event for the Bromley International dance class. They welcome friends to join them as Fiona takes them step by step through some more of her inexhaustible repertoire.

The weekend includes comfortable en-suite accommodation with full board and a plentiful choice of food. Places are limited by the size of the dance space and the available accommodation. It may not be possible to allocate single rooms but non-dancing friends and family are welcome and can enjoy walking or sightseeing in the area. Full board and accommodation is £90.00 and the dance course (either General or Advanced) is £14.00.

For further details and a booking form, please send s.a.e. to me at 115 Chetwynd Road, London NW5 1DA.

CATHY MEUNIER

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ARMENIAN

Dalila Heath will be commencing her monthly Armenian dance class on Tuesday, 18th September, at The Place, 17 Duke's Road, London W.C.1. Tuition from 8.00 to 9.00 p.m. Dancing from 9.00 to 10.00 p.m. Thereafter, every third Tuesday of the month. Entrance £3.00.

CHRISTMAS YUGOSLAVIAN FOLKDANCE FESTIVAL 2001-2002

OKUD Gradimir are organising a folkdance festival in Belgrade from 24th December 2001 to 2nd January 2002. It includes:

30 hours teaching folk dances from Yugoslavia
Christmas lunch
New Year celebration
Performance from ensemble OKUD Gradimir
Meeting with national folkdance ensemble KOLLO

For more details, contact (before 20th November) either OKUD Gradimir in Belgrade on Tel: +381/11/456-549 or Paja Milic in Holland on Tel: +31/229/234-609 or 229/249-109.



BULGARIAN DANCE COURSE WITH EDDY TIJSSSEN AT DERWENT BANK, LAKE DISTRICT

19TH TO 21ST APRIL 2002

Dancers who enjoy Bulgarian dancing will need little introduction to Eddy Tijssen from the Netherlands. He has taught many times in England and his courses are always very much enjoyed both by beginners and experienced dancers. Eddy is a talented specialist of Bulgarian folk dancing, and a musician, who has spent much time in Bulgaria. The dances that he brings, and his teaching of them, are always popular.

This residential weekend at the HF guest house at Derwent Bank, on the shores of Derwentwater, Lake District, includes comfortable en-suite accommodation and full board. It is a delightful area for walking and sightseeing. Dancers can select either the General or Advanced course, or both courses, and there will be social dancing in the evenings. Non-dancing friends and family are welcome and can enjoy the facilities of the house, which includes table tennis, croquet, putting, short tennis and badminton. Full board accommodation is £92.00 and each course is £15.00.

For full details and a booking form, please send s.a.e. to me at 115 Chetwynd Road, London NW5 1DA.

CATHY MEUNIER



All material for the October issue of SIFD NEWS must reach the Editor by 17th September. Please print in BLOCK CAPITALS ALL NAMES OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND DANCES UNLESS TYPEWRITTEN.

A LITTLE REMINDER OF THE "OLD" POLAND

During my visit to South Poland this summer, I was taken to see the Corpus Christi procession in Stary(olde) Sacz. Whilst it is normal for there to be processions around Catholic churches on this holy day, this tiny town in the foothills of the Beskid mountains has an especially elaborate one dating back to the 13th century and which they managed to maintain right throughout the communist era.

First a long church service of Vespers and Holy Mass, during which crowds gathered outside along the road and all around the large old cobbled square to wait for the procession to emerge to the ringing of bells. I understand the purpose is "to show belief in the presence of Christ in the Holy Sacrament and to worship Him publicly". I cannot claim to remember the exact order or all the different elements of the procession - there was so much to see - but I made my notes as soon after as possible.

First came a tall, teenage boy carrying the cross, with other boys around him in long white robes and gold girdles and carrying lighted candles. One went out - always does, doesn't it! Then came older girls in their full length white dresses, one of them in the middle carrying a satin cushion with "M" (for Mary presumably) embroidered on it and with long white ribbons attached which other girls held. Then more groups of girls, again in white, some with large square navy-edged collars. They were from various religious organizations, so I was told. The priest followed, carrying the Monstrance aloft under a gold canopy which was borne by acolytes. Men around and behind him were swinging censers. All the while, there was chanting and singing.

After this came many small children and the atmosphere lightened a little as they did their "holy bit" under the proud gaze of parents. Most of them managed pious expressions but inevitably there were some delightful little lapses. A group of small boys in their pre-communicant garb of dark trousers and short white tunics with large red cape collars edged with gold braid rang handbells most solemnly, except for two who were having a furious contest to see who could ring the louder and quicker!

The little girls were in their folk costumes, which are similar to those from Krakow. I had a great time spotting the odd really old gorset (waistcoat) with lovely beading and embroidery, plus little skirts in natural dyed wool, probably handed down several generations, from the modern copies. These tiny girls carried white baskets hung from around their necks with ribbons and filled with flower petals which at certain points they strew on the ground. Again, smiles were raised when one of them wildly threw all of hers in one go and then had nothing left, to her evident distress. Mum had to comfort her and go off for replenishments! I don't know the answer, incidentally, as to why there were no small boys in their folk costumes in the procession, just a few in the crowds around.

There were many other parts to the procession, including the Fire Brigade and men carrying various ornate religious banners. They sang "Yours is the Pride and the Glory". At each of the four corners of the square altars covered in flowers and greenery had been erected and at these points all stopped for more prayers and singing. The priest said the ancient prayer asking "Protection from Fire, Famine and Pestilence". I think it was at this point that nearly all knelt, procession and onlookers alike. The cobblestones were very hard and uneven, and it was touching to see several elderly folk trying so hard to get down and up.

I am told that eight days after this, during Vespers, wreaths of herbs and flowers are taken to be blessed. These are then hung beneath pictures or above doors and stay there the whole year signifying the continuity of the church's celebration of faith. I believe various other "folk" elements have come in here also, such as luck for the house, fertility for the land, etc. and perhaps dating back to pagan

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times. All this I found a manifestation of intense religious conviction, but at the same time thought about how folk customs can be said sometimes to be so interwoven into such religious ceremonies and events.

My much earlier yearly visits to Poland were always geared to learning new dances to take back and teach to our group and to get music and authentic recordings. I also searched for patterns and pieces of costume and materials to help build up our wardrobe of different regional costumes, so it was usually a race against time. Now I am too old to take an active part in the dance scene, it is wonderful not to have this pressure and still be able to visit and learn more about my much-loved Poland's people and customs.

I am indebted to Simon Guest for making an enlargement for the cover of this issue from a snap taken some eleven years ago of my friend's small daughter when she was taking part in the procession.

BETTY HARVEY

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CENTRAL LONDON AND CROXLEY GREEN DANCE GROUPS AT VICTORIA EMBANKMENT GARDENS

Because of the sad death of Kay Kedge, who usually arranged these concerts, there was an absence of publicity about any of the other groups who danced at Victoria Embankment Gardens this summer. Consequently, this last concert of the season was the only one I saw.

It was a blazing hot afternoon for dancing and struggling with costume changing but both teams gave a lively and very varied programme to quite a large and appreciative audience. The notes which were handed round about the groups, and with a list of the dances, were a very good idea I thought.

It is no use pretending that these two teams, and many others within the S.I.F.D., can project a youthful image these days. It is a problem of which we are all aware and to which there seems little answer in spite of valiant efforts to attract younger blood. Having said that, it struck me on this occasion how long dance experience and coping with a stage performance, plus enjoyment in the dancing, came across so well from both groups on 28th July.

At the start of the concert, the announcer said, "This one is dedicated to Kay". It was a happy thought and I am sure she would have been very pleased.

BETTY HARVEY

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Dear Friends,

I should like to thank everyone who sent me cards and letters before and after Kay's death. I was also very touched by the number of people who came to Kay's funeral, and the sympathy and kindness shown by all. Thank you once again.

FRANK KEDGE
9 Barnes Rise, Kings Langley,
Herts. WD4 8AN

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

S.I. Oct.13th S.I.F.D. DAY COURSE - JAPANESE with Marina Wolstenholme.

S.I. Oct.13th RAINMAKERS INTERNATIONAL FOLKDANCE GROUP are celebrating their Silver Anniversary with a Dance at Ickleford Village Hall, near Hitchin, Herts. 7.30-11.00 p.m. Music by "Cloudburst". M.C.: Jill Bransby. Cabaret spots. Tickets £6.00 to include refreshments. Further details and tickets from Richard Thom, 01438 316651.

Oct.13th BALKANPLUS

Oct.20th HUNGARIAN & GYPSY DANCES with Hilary Bolton at Stone Cross Memorial Hall, Eastbourne. 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. £13.00 (£9.00 concessions). Enquiries to Silvia McIntyre, 01323 502962.

S.I. Nov.3rd FRITH FOLK are pleased to welcome Marina Wolstenholme as tutor for their Day Course, with dances from her recent visits to Romania, Bulgaria, with some from Israel and Russia. At Town End Methodist Church, Chapel en le Frith, near Buxton, from 10.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., followed by afternoon tea (included). Cost about £6.00 depending on numbers. Ring Pat Phillips on 01298 24450 for further details.

Nov.3rd BLOWZABELLA DANCE at Bath Spa University College (Newton St.Loe). For details ring Nicki Cawthorne on 01225 332025.

Nov.3rd/4th YUGOSLAVIAN DANCE WEEKEND at Bognor Regis. Details given in June. Enquiries to Janet Douglas, 01243 265010.

Nov.10th ARMENIAN DANCE COURSE organized by Nutbrook I.F.D.G. at Stevenson Junior School, Wadsworth Road, Stapleford, Notts. Tutor: Dalila Heath. 10.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. One session £3.50, all day £6.00. Bring your own lunch. Information from John & Gill Morral on 0115 917 1831.

S.I. Nov.17th S.I.F.D. DAY COURSE - ROMANIAN with Nick Green.

Nov.30th/Dec.2nd ISRAELI DANCE WEEKEND at Bourton-on-the Water. See p.5.

Dec.1st ZIVKO FIRFOV GROUP PARTY.

S.I. Dec.14th/16th S.I.F.D. WEEKEND AT DUNFORD. Contact Jack Richardson, Dept. of Chemical Engineering, University, Swansea SA2 8PP. Tel: 01792 403153 (home) 01792 295194 (work).

Dec.24th/Jan.2nd CHRISTMAS YUGOSLAVIAN FOLKDANCE FESTIVAL. See p.6.

Apr.19th/21st BULGARIAN DANCE WEEKEND at Derwent Bank. See p.6.

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Events covered by S.I.F.D. insurance are marked "S.I." in the margin. Please remember that the onus is on you to mark each event when sending in the notice if your event is covered by our insurance.

ODOORN INTERNATIONAL FOLKDANCE FESTIVAL

Not having a Milton Keynes Festival to organize this year. Jill and I visited the Odoorn Festival in Holland and found it to be extremely enjoyable. But first a warning: this is a festival for audience and performers, not for participation.

Odoorn is a tiny village near the town of Emmen in North-East Holland, 155 miles from the Hook of Holland. There were sixteen foreign dance groups and five Dutch groups. They performed on six good-size stages from Wednesday evening to Sunday afternoon. Three stages were uncovered, two partly covered and the sixth was the main stage in a large metal frame marquee seating in excess of 1500. There were no seats at the other stages but some people took their own folding chairs. The groups were from countries all around the world and performances ranged from authentic folk dance arranged for stage presentation, through more choreographed presentations, to more stylised presentations. Standard of dance varied enormously but the Dutch audience loved everything, applauded enthusiastically and joined in or la-la-ed anything they knew or nearly knew. Attendance was high and the main marquee was nearly full every night and overflowing on Saturday night.

The format for the festival was that four or five groups danced on each of the five outside stages from 7.30 to 9.00 and then six groups performed on the main stage from 9.00 to 11.00, plus extra sessions on Saturday and Sunday. It cost 10 guilders (£3) on weekdays or 35 guilders a season ticket.

The groups were:

Albania - Elba folk. Very stylised and balletic. Small group.

Belgium - Pallieterke. Large group, very popular. Very effective Maypole dance, nice stilt dance and lots of simple dances well presented.

Brazil - Sarandeiros Cidade de Belo Horizonte. A late replacement. A big group and very entertaining. I know nothing about Brazilian folk dance but there seems a strong Spanish influence and one dance and its costume looked very Basque. Religious processions with elaborate and very beautiful costumes mixed with folk culture in one of their items.

Bulgaria - Haskovo. Excellent high speed intricate stepping. Very well presented. One of the girls' costumes had incredibly short skirts which I cannot believe is traditional, but I may be wrong.

China - Inner Mongolian Etoke Folk. Very interesting and beautifully danced. Moiseyev (the famous Director of the Moiseyev Dance Company) said that he was influential in reviving Mongolian folk dance, and although Mongolia is now in China it seems the Moiseyev influence lives on. Beautiful traditional costumes and music.

Costa Rica - Escacena. Small group doing carnival dancing.

Greece - Aighon. Excellent presentation. Dances from several regions with excellent costumes to match.

Hungary -????. A late fill-in. A group of teenagers. Very enthusiastic but seriously under-rehearsed.

Ireland - Caride. A group of young teenagers doing some very traditional dances and suddenly switching to an excellent "Riverdance" type choreography. Good dancers but a shortage of men. As a fill-in, to give time for a costume change, the band sang "Wild Rover" and, would you believe it, half the audience were singing or la-la-ing along and, unlike many English audiences, they got the clapping right.

Italy - Monte Patulo. An enormous group which swamped the stage with life, colour and sound. Everyone on stage, including grandmas and children, all having a wonderful time. Skill level low but audience appreciation high. Everyone la-la-ed to "O Sole Mio".

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Poland - Dobron. A typical display of traditional dances choreographed for the stage. Good but somewhat lack-lustre.

Russia - Spring Dawns. This group comes from Voronezh, where the world-famous "Voronezh Company" comes from, and their influence is strong. They were brilliant and the audience was in raptures. The highlight was a girl in a crouch position being spun at high speed by a boy whilst the couple were on a 6-foot wide disc which was held high in the air by eight dancers.

Ukraine - Junist Podillya. Highly skilled and highly choreographed. It is still possible to invent new solos for the men to do. Predictable but brilliant.

Slovakia - Mai. I thought I knew most of the Slovak dance groups but I had not heard of Mai from Piestany. They gave us presentations of many of the popular folk traditions such as Zemplin, Saris, Svit, Detva including an excellent Fujara player and a really lovely Myava/Starababska combining the soft and gentle style of the older folk with the very lively lifts and fast steps of the youngsters.

Spain - Xareu. This group from Asturia (North West Spain) gave us some beautifully presented dances from that region. Some of the costumes look so heavy I wonder how they can dance at all.

Thailand - Srinakharinwirot. This is a very wellknown classical dance company presenting what I believe is traditional temple dance. It is fascinating stuff when you first see it, with the exquisite costume, the women's 6-inch long fingernails, and the men's face masks. However, I confess I find it all a bit slow and boring after a while.

Netherlands. The home country provided a different Dutch group each day. We saw three of the five. They were all the first item on the main stage in the evening concert and gave an arrangement of traditional Dutch folk dances. All the groups seemed well known to the audience and were very warmly received.

DON & JILL ALLISON



FOR SALE

Variable speed Portogram twin-cassette and CD player (baked bean shape). Speed control on CD and cassettes. Cost £200 two and a half years ago; only used twice a month for U3A class. Best offer secures.

FIONA HOWARTH, 17a Ravensbourne Road, Bromley BR1 1HN. Tel: 020 8460 2305.



FOR SALE

Black character shoes (Gamba). Size 42. Almost new. £18.50.

If anyone is interested and lives in Kent, East Sussex or London, I can arrange for the shoes to be tried on before buying.

ARLENE HANSELL, 01892 833025. Please leave a message on answerphone.