

SIFD
NEWS

OCT
2005



SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCING

Internet Website: www.sifd.org

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

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This month's cover was sent in by Dalila Heath and shows a woman's costume from Mush, Armenia. Colours: Hat, two shades of wine; Blouse, centre front green, yellow and rust (green predominating), stripes yellow and wine, trim rust and white, sleeve cuff rust and turquoise, turquoise motif; Sash, brown with turquoise accent; Apron, multicolour (wine predominating); Skirt, brown and turquoise, side panels light and dark blue; Shoes, brown.

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THE END OF AN ERA

The next issue of SIFD NEWS will be in the hands of Janet Douglas, who has nobly offered to take over the job as Editor. I am sure she will make a good job of it but I shall miss the enjoyment (and the discipline!) of being the Editor since 1967.

It started, for me, before then as I worked on the news-sheet with Ken Blackwood for a while and we had great fun together. When he left to travel overland to New Zealand (on a rusty motorbike, which fell apart in Nepal!) I took on the Editorship on a temporary basis (it has yet to be ratified!).

In the early days I used to type on stencils (probably not known to you youngsters) on an old Remington and I was also involved in the printing on a Roneo machine, turned by hand - the folding, bagging up, stamping and posting, but for these latter jobs I had very willing helpers. Four or five of us used to get together and spend the evening working on the news-sheet and taking turns to turn the handle of the Roneo (which frequently misbehaved), picking up the individual sheets, stapling them etc. etc., finishing quite late and each taking a bundle to the nearest pillar box. I have to thank Will Green, Barney Salmon, Kelsey Blundell, Sylvia Fulton and Roland Minton for those good old days. Sadly, all of them have died but happily, still with us are Frank Flanagan, who was one of the helpers, and of course Doug and Maureen Wells who did such a marvellous job helping me for so many years.

More recently, and still helping, I have been glad to have Dalila Heath, Michael and Edwina Holdup and Simon Guest (who took over from Alan Morton) and I hope they will continue to support Janet (Douglas) and I hope that you, the members, will continue to send in material to keep the SIFD NEWS going.

If I'd had any drawing skill I would have drawn a cover this month showing an elderly lady (me) toddling off into the sunset and a brighter younger lady (Janet) coming on to the scene, but I haven't, so picture this if you will.

LILY AVERY

Song and Dance at Lake Ohrid

Eight of us arrived from England to temperatures around 40 C, which happily cooled as we neared Lake Ohrid where the seminar organised by Paja and Madelon Milic and Ibrahim Rizevski took place. The Park Hotel is situated lakeside, a beautiful setting, with views over the lake to Albania.

The dances taught by Vladimir Janevski were from the Ofce Pole region of Macedonia: Krstacko Masko Oro. Zenska Potrculka. Arnautka. Vrteleska. Dzonkata. Sopkata. Tresenica. Cacak (unique version to this area). Pajdusko. Sitnoto. Oj ti Maro Dilindaro. The style for this region has marked characteristics; “they dance like bears”. Our singing teacher, Rodna Velickovsko was smilingly offered as an example. Vladimir said when watching her he sees how perfectly she dances the Ofcepolsko style, but maybe she is too much like a bear! The body is relaxed, leaning slightly forward; an unusual feature of most dances is dragging the feet on the ground. I had just bought new opinci and worried that sliding them on a marble floor would wear them out before the end of the course; usually the dances would be on sand or grass.

Then we had THE EXCURSIONS, (this article could nearly have been entitled “Shipwrecked in Albania”). The first by boat across Lake Ohrid. I complained to John that we were pitching and tossing; and was assured that we were rolling and yawing! (apparently pitching is when the boat nosedives and then points upwards). Ibrahim was looking distinctly queasy by the time we reached Sveti Naum. The captain refused to further risk wrecking the boat (near the Albanian coastline) so we were set to find a new means of transport. Although Lake Ohrid is a resort it is still unspoilt so things like taxis are not always available away from town.

Once ashore we visited another beautiful church – and there saw a white peacock – an amazing sight. There followed a white knuckle ride round hairpin bends in an extremely overloaded local bus. The rest of the day went smoothly and we sampled the delicious Ohrid trout and were all taxied home.

Our second excursion was to the next lake ‘Prespa’. Hairpin bends again, but these were tree lined so we couldn’t see down very often (perhaps I am alone with my hairpin-bend phobia). We did stop for a view, which was worth it all; and even watched a hang gliding instructor flapping his arms to encourage his fledgling off the sheer face of the mountain. We also visited a costume museum which included costumes over 400 years old.

Our last excursion, in a convoy of taxis, was to the Roman amphitheatre to watch a performance by Tanec – the national folkdance group. It was spellbinding with some very exciting male dancers. I could imagine how in times past warriors showed their strength and agility. Tanec danced on their toes, this is because they feel the village dances are not graceful enough for the stage.

Because we were ‘so good’ some dances from other regions were added to the programme: Patrunino. Donkino. Sitna Lisa. Bukite. Skudrinka. Bufcansko. There are some differences to those in our repertoire because Vladimir, a stickler for authenticity, ruled out stylistic and performance variations.



Costumes at Struga

We were also joined for a couple of days by Rada Visinska who was the lead dancer when Tanec started around forty years ago. Another visiting celebrity was Radojica Kusmanovic, artistic director of the Serbian (formerly Yugoslavian) national folkdance group – Kolo. He, Ibrahim and Vladimir gave a virtuoso performance at our final party; first on the drum and then in turns, it was absolutely enthralling.

Song and Dance at Lake Ohrid cont.

On almost the last day, some of us decided to visit the next town Struga. To our delight we found that they were holding their annual traditional costume parade. (Note because Ohrid and Struga had a feud going on, each town would not advertise each others events). Individuals and groups came from all over Macedonia dressed in their traditional costumes and paraded the streets, stopping to dance here and there. John was frantically trying to photograph everyone as he realised he could get copyright-free costume pictures for his website.

There were many other sights, sounds and experiences to make our trip worthwhile but I think the local, home-made rakija clinched it for John. I shall try and sing the drinking song Rodna taught us when he appears in need and admire the local costume (made in 1938/9) I bought.

Janet Douglas

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DUNFORD, MIDHURST, WEST SUSSEX, 16TH-18TH DECEMBER 2005

If you've been before, there's no need to tell you that this is a really enjoyable weekend of dancing and walking or just relaxing in the lounge with its log fire and Christmas tree. Accommodation is in single, double or twin bedrooms, en-suite, at a well-furnished country house at the foot of the Northern slopes of the South Downs, once the home of Richard Cobden. Janet Woolbar has kindly agreed to lead the dancing on Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoon. On both Saturday and Sunday mornings there will be a walk from the house, returning in time for lunch. For non-walkers, on Saturday morning there is the opportunity to visit Midhurst's monthly market. There will be Christmas dinner (the meals are jolly good) and carol singing on Saturday evening.

If you haven't been before, and you're a dancer, I'm sure you will feel at home and among friends. The cost of the weekend is £117.00 - the same as last year! Looking forward to hearing from you.

DOT BRADBURY (Mrs.)
Tel: 020 8540 3464

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BALKANPLUS, 8TH OCTOBER 2005

M.C. for the next Balkanplus will be Brian Dowsett. There will be opportunity to review/try out some of the new dances from Yves Moreau's recent Bulgarian workshop. There may be, but not as yet guaranteed, guests to include Anne Leach, who organises the Dance Around the World weekends, to do a cameo slot as publicity for the 15th/16th October, and maybe a Klezmer dancer and musicians to teach and lead a dance.

MAUREEN FELTON

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SIFD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. Just a reminder for this year's A.G.M., which is a small part of what should be a thoroughly enjoyable day:

<u>26th November</u>	Workshop	10.30-3.30
	A.G.M.	4.00-5.30
	International Dance	7.00-10.00

At St.Ninian's United Reformed Church Hall, Egerton Road South, Chorlton cum Hardy, Manchester. Please try to come!

ALISON SCRIMSHAW

THE 9TH KOPRIVSHTITSA FESTIVAL, BULGARIA, 2005

Set in the Sredna Gora (Central Highlands), Koprivshtitsa has three claims to fame - first, the town can boast beautiful examples of National Revival architecture rivalled only by Plovdiv; secondly, it has a special place in Bulgarian history as the centre of the abortive April Rising of 1876 against the Ottoman Empire. However, the reason I along with hundreds of other tourists ascended the wooded hills was to attend what has become the major folklore festival in Bulgaria.

Above the town on a meadow (The Voivodenets) every five years, three full days of songs, instrumental music, dances and rituals are presented on seven wooden stages, each representing a particular region. To get there, the participants, mostly ordinary working people, have gone through a long process of selection. In addition, a large central stage is reserved for the "solemn" opening and closing ceremonies and other televised performances. The town square has its own stage too, where visiting groups from abroad are scheduled to perform in the evenings, though it is commonly occupied by the more flamboyant during the hours of public dancing. The bars, restaurants and campsites are venues for impromptu music and dancing into the small hours. On Friday night at 9.30 the Nestinarski dance is traditionally performed in the town centre, where dancers walk barefoot over red-hot embers.

The festival was first held forty years ago and it has been twenty years since I last visited with Dunav Balkan Group. I was particularly keen to find out if the event had succumbed to commercial pressures and whether the Bulgarian public was still supporting it in these post-Communist days. On both counts I was not disappointed. True, there were more sellers of merchandise this time and we were no longer struck, as we were in the Iron Curtain days, by that common bond of enthusiasm for the music and dance, but I was delighted to find that practically nothing had changed. The Bulgarian support in the crowds encouraged better performances. One old granny hobbled up to the microphone with the help of a stick and, egged on by the crowd, began to enjoy her singing so much that I'm certain she added a couple of verses to her song. I remember at a Sarajevo festival in the 1960s being taken aback when I first heard the audience applaud between verses. Now, it seems so natural.

The strict adherence to the programme was zealously maintained but was nearly compromised when the crowd spontaneously started dancing to a children's tamboura and gadulka orchestra. The dancers naturally wanted more, but no amount of money would have influenced that panel of judges. Without detailed knowledge of the programme order, the visitor wanders from stage to stage - perhaps lingering where dances from a favourite region are being performed. I was so pleased to happen upon the same dance on the Jambol stage that I had witnessed on my first visit in 1985. A line of perhaps twenty men wore leather boots and spurs, green jackets and what looked like gold crowns; a separate leading character wielded a sword and another character had his face covered by a pointed black hood. They danced with a steady, perfectly disciplined offbeat stamp, punctuated by sharp variations executed without any discernible command. The crowd loved it and I was not surprised to see them again among the best groups performing before the closing ceremony.

The wealth and health of Bulgarian folklore is astounding. Our absorption with dance can make us overlook the existence of other traditional performances - some akin to Mummer plays - and the rare and totally outlandish costumes donned for all sorts of rituals. I was also struck by the humour in many of the performances, which encourages me to think that this is very much a living folk art. Happily, most Bulgarians recognise their folklore as a valuable national asset.

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It was good to see a number of friends and acquaintances from the U.K. at Koprivshtitsa, along with the usual contingents from U.S.A., Japan and Holland. Nobody seemed to be put off by a persistent storm on Friday night and the slightly disrupting rain on Saturday, but I didn't ask the campers. The next big Bulgarian festival is Pirin Pee ("Piring Sings" - not a reference to the anticipated weather!) next summer. I hope to see you there.

BRIAN DOWSETT

All material for the November issue of SIFD NEWS
must be received by the NEW Editor by 17th October.
Address on p.2.



Piece from the Past

September 1977 recorded the success of the recent Summer School in Edinburgh, and various outings and safaris for several groups. If you wanted to dance, there seemed to be opportunities everywhere – unlike Kelsey Blundell's experience while holidaying in Norway. Although there for a month, her hostess – who didn't even like folk dancing – had to follow many leads before locating an event for her to join. I was particularly interested in her comments about costumes – *"I was very disappointed not to have finished my own costume in time for my godson's Confirmation; that is, until I was reliably informed that nowadays one is not allowed to make one's own costume without prior permission and following the strictest instructions. This ruling was passed, I understand, because so many 'incorrect' costumes were being made. Women authorised to sew a 'bunad' must first attend classes of some 100 hours and follow strictly the rules laid down for that particular costume which, when completed, must be approved by the authority for that region before it can be worn."* It makes the whole process sound very daunting, and a little like doing community service; however I can see it would eliminate 'regional variations'. Does this attitude still prevail? It was also a very expensive process – an officially-made Aust-Agder costume cost over £200, and the associated jewellery – brooches, belt clasp, studs, cufflinks and silver jacket-buttons – about £300. And this at a time when you paid 50p to attend a day's workshop.

Kelsey also summarised the latest Bert Price Proficiency Exam results. Many silver badge awards were withheld, as entrants could perform the given dances, but not always demonstrate sufficiently well the individual steps integral to that country's dances – for example the Swedish Hambo and Vestgota steps. "Almost a complete lesson was given after the examination" for one country. It sounds like a slightly saddening occasion for both the examiners and the examined, but I'm sure they improved the standards.

The SIFD badges advertised at the start of the **October 1970** News caught my eye – 3/6 for a lapel badge, and 7/6 for a badge for your scooter! How many SIFD members nowadays have a scooter? And would anyone like the return of lapel badges? To commemorate our 60th birthday, perhaps?

Bert Price reports on what sounds like the first Billingham festival – *"At the end of the Course everyone agreed as to its great value to the international folk dancer and requested the Billingham authorities to please run another Course next year, and I believe they will."* There were dancers and teachers from **nine** separate countries taking part. It sounds completely exhausting – *"by now our senses were becoming dulled"* – and this was only Tuesday. Wednesday brought a group from the Congo – *"a session about which we had all expressed some reservations or doubts as to our ability to learn anything."* But *"We were wrong. The group leader taught admirably and the class interest was great, so great that we tried hard to fit in an extra Congo session....."*

Now, I have several questions – the Billingham Festival still runs, but never seems as popular as Eastbourne, and this year had problems filling its classes (although from this it sounds marvellous) – why is this? Does anyone have any memories of the dances from the Congo? Should we clamour for a Congo day course? Why is it that of all the dances mentioned from all the countries offered it's only those from Israel that I recognise – and all **six** at that? What happened to Bourrée des Rats, La Gigoulette and Pelele from France?

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Nov.4th/6th RESIDENTIAL COURSE OF BULGARIAN SINGING OR WALKING WEEKEND with Dessi Stefanova in Selworthy, Somerset. Easy Balkan and International dancing in the evenings with Marina Wolstenholme. Comfortable en-suite accommodation, full board. An excellent base for walking. Optional full-day guided walk, plus a short guided walk for singers. Friends and family welcome. Full package including singing course £150. Full board accommodation, evening dances, guided walks £126. For details and booking form please send s.a.e. to Cathy Meunier, 115 Chetwynd Road, London NW5 1DA

S.I. Nov.19th SIFD DAY COURSE - CROATIAN DANCES with Nenad Bićanić, 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. at Cecil Sharp House. SIFD members £6; non-members £8.

S.I. Nov.19th ISRAELI DAY COURSE with Roberto Haddon, organized by Rainmakers. £7 full day, £4.50 half day. 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. The Parish Hall, St.Michaels, Broadway, Letchworth, Herts. Drinks available but best to bring your own lunch. Enquiries: 01462 457791.

Nov.20th GREEK WORKSHOP AT LYKION TON HELLINIDON. See p.8.

Nov.26th SIFD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND DAY OF DANCE. See p.4.

Nov.26th ANNUAL BALKAN DANCE DAY with Paul Boizot at Sheffield. 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. £8-£22 (sliding scale). Book in advance. For details ring 0114 256 1708.

S.I. Dec.3rd SIFD WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH CHRISTMAS DANCE, 7.30-10.30 p.m. at St.Giles Church Hall, Church Road, Sheldon (North of A45 near airport). M.C.: Maggie Kaye. £3.00. Bring-and-share supper. Ring Maggie for further information, on 0121 608 1437.

Dec.3rd ZIVKO FIRFOV BALKAN PARTY at Highgate Newtown Community Centre, 25 Bertram Street, London N.19. Nearest Underground: Archway (Northern Line). Dances from Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia; also from Bulgaria, Greece and Romania. Admission £7 including refreshments. BY TICKET ONLY from Irene Keywood, 133 Third Avenue, Dagenham, Essex RM10 9BD. Tel: 020 8592 4427. (s.a.e.please).

Dec,3rd KLEZMER KLUB. Wonderful music from Eastern Europe and the Jewish tradition. Music to dance to, sing along with and to weep to. At the Exmouth Arms, Starcross Street, London N.W.1 (corner of Cobourg Street near Euston and Euston Square stations). 8.15 p.m. Entrance £5(unwaged £4). Information from 020 7281 7700. Cellar Upstairs Folk Club.

Dec.16th/18th DUNFORD WEEKEND. See p.4.

S.I. Dec.31st SIFD WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY, 8.00 p.m. to 12.00 at Downing Hall, Knowle. M.C.: Grace Pittman. £3. Bring-and-share supper. More details from Maggie Kaye, 0121 608 1437.

Mar.24th/26th 2006 RESIDENTIAL WEEKEND OF INTERNATIONAL DANCES with Bob Neal at Freshwater Bay, Isle of Wight. All inclusive cost of weekend £133 en-suite, £123 with wash-basin. Further details from Pamela Le Goaziou, 55 Mitchell Road, Bedhampton, Hants.PO9 3QA. Tel: 023 9264 1028. £40 deposit secures place. Please send s.a.e. for reply.

Apt.7th/10th 2006 RESIDENTIAL COURSE OF BULGARIAN FOLK DANCES with Yves Moreau at Malhamdale, Yorkshire Dales. Comfortable en-suite accommodation, full board, indoor swimming pool. Choice of General or Intermediate course, or both courses. Delightful area for walking. Malham Cove nearby. Non-dancing friends and family welcome. Full board accommodation £175 (three nights). Single course £24; both courses £39.Full details and booking form from Cathy Meunier, 115 Chetwynd Road, London NW5 1DA. Please send s.a.e.

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- S.I. Apr.28th/May 1st (2nd) 2006 SIFD L'ONG BANK-HOLIDAY WEEKEND at Halsway Manor, an attractive folklore centre on the edge of the Quantocks in North Somerset. Join in folk dancing and walking (or just sightseeing). Full-day outing with coach transport provided on the Sunday to the coast or Exmoor. Inclusive cost about £155 for three nights with supplements for the fourth night or for en-suite bedrooms. For further details/bookings contact Gordon Adie, 01752 225539 or Jack Richardson, 01792 403153.
- ✓ S.I. July 22nd/29th 2006 SIFD SUMMER SCHOOL at Swansea. Teachers: Silviu Ciuciumis (Romanian), Cristina Casarini (Italy), Maggie O'Regan and Jill Bransby (General). Details from Roger Sturge, 10 Carmarthen Road, Bristol BS9 4DU.

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STOP PRESS. SUNDAY. 20TH NOVEMBER LYKION'S WORKSHOP

I'm sure you all remember the spectacular opening of the Athens Olympic Games! Well that was performed by the Athens Lykion ton Hellinidon and organised and presented by **TASSO TLITSES**. YES THAT'S WHO IS COMING to take the workshop.

As always Marianne and Anita are ever ready to accept suggestions for workshops and ever since Susan (Jordan) and I shared a Balkanplus, where I dragged out all the wedding dances I could find from as many countries as possible, it's been a consuming passion of mine to extend that idea. They took that on board with 'brass knobs on', so this workshop will offer a plethora of **CELEBRATION DANCES** – from traditional events & ritual style, homage to the seasons and from all parts of Greece – a real GREEK FEAST no less, so don't miss this one-off event.

COME & ENJOY THIS KALEIDOSCOPE!! There will be plenty of opportunity to ask questions and Tasso will include a little explanatory talk to ensure full understanding and enjoyment.

As usual there will be a booklet and perhaps cassette and video to order. Quite often there are cassettes and videos from previous courses to buy so come prepared. If refreshments are not available at lunch time there are, as you know, plenty of cafes and snack bars open nearby, or you can bring your own & sit opposite in the park. Baker Street & Great Portland Street are the nearest tube stations. The Hellenic Centre is on the street parallel to Baker Street. (Easy if you could fly over the Baker Street houses facing the Planetarium!) Parking in surrounding streets.

Any queries please ring Anita on 0207 229 4086 or in a panic 07973 75288. (And for suggestions/requests for future workshops.)
See you there!

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Diki Gleeson.

Membership

Sorry to nag, but if you have forgotten to renew your membership (due on 1st September) PLEASE do it NOW.

The labels for the November NEWS have to be printed in the second week of October at the latest, so please make sure you don't miss out.

Forms are available from squest@iee.org or 01992 577065.

GYPSY DANCING IN FINDHORN Janna Eliot

Have just spent a week in an extraordinary place - the Findhorn Foundation - doing a course on Gypsy dancing. Or that's what I thought I was doing. In fact it turned out to be Sacred Dancing, but more of that later.

Unknown to me, the Foundation, set in a bay between rolling sand dunes and calm flat seas, is dedicated to spiritual education and planetary transformation. Getting there is like going on a pilgrimage - I flew from London to Aberdeen, taxied to Dyce station - a little country platform which connects to Forres in northern Scotland. While waiting for the train I met an oilrig engineer, who was astonished at my interest in his exotic occupation. Then a 6 year old Alien Princess bowled up, on her way to a party in the next village along the track. Complete with tinfoil hair and a green face, melting globs of makeup in the unusually hot sunshine, she entertained us for a while with tales of seals and dolphins.

The train goes up through pine forests and mountains. After two hours and another taxi ride I was at the Findhorn Foundation. I spent my first evening walking in unusually hot sunshine by the sea, and went to hear the wonderful guest band Xenos in the Universal Hall, where I joined in the Gypsy dancing.

Next day I registered for the dance course with a multinational crowd of students - Dutch, Swiss, Americans, Canadians, Brazilians, Japanese and a handful of Brits. Then I was shown to a luxurious bungalow with a grass roof and spacious kitchen, and met my housemates. After a vast and healthy vegetarian meal in the Communal Dining room, we went to Universal Hall for a short dance session.

This is where I got my first shock. I had gone to Findhorn with the sole purpose of extending my repertoire of Romani dancing. But when at our first dance meeting, the facilitator invoked the spirits of dance and music as we circled around a candle, I realised I'd stumbled into something with a far deeper significance. We held hands and closed our eyes while waiting for the angels of movement and melody to descend. Well, I held hands but kept my eyes firmly open, not wanting to set my clothes on fire.

Then we were divided into small Sharing groups. My leader, Ubaldina from Spain, asked us to share our thoughts with her. There was the usual tension in the circle following such invitations, until a young Dutch girl cracked and said how grateful she was to be at the Foundation. This opened the gates for the Germans to pour out their gratitude and their feelings of being blessed. Then we all picked an "angel card" and had to speak about it. My card said "Love", and what I said is not worth repeating, but elicited some wise nodding from Ubaldina, who reminded me of the caretaker of a school in Valencia where I once worked.

The evening dance was fronted by the brilliant band, Xenos. They play gaida, (bagpipes), zurna (kind of pipe,) drums, tambora (small stringed instrument), and guitar. The vocalist was excellent, and although they are Australian and have no blood connection with the Roma at all, they produce a great sound. I got another surprise when instead of applauding, the entire hall of 150 people turned to the stage and wagged their hands in the air. My own rapturous clapping thundered like the crack of doom.

The next day was Sunday, which started with Taize. For those of you not in the know, Taize is a monastery in France, specialising in a kind of harmonic hymn singing in different languages. Well, I like singing, so that was OK, though I got a bit fidgety when we'd held one note for over five minutes. After Brunch, I was on KP (Kitchen Patrol.) Reporting to the kitchen for my 30 minute shift, I was lucky enough to be given the dining tables to wipe, which I did with Mary from the village. The others were landed with scrubbing out ovens and dishwashers. Before we helpers began our duty, we had to 'tune in', holding hands, and saying how happy we were to be cleaning the kitchen. Then we demonstrated how we were feeling by beating out a rhythm. I chose a Spanish Flamenco beat, which I used all week when called upon to express similar emotions.

Rinsing out my cloth, I was about to rush off to join the organised tour round the area, but was called back to 'tune out' and think about what a valuable and wonderful job I'd done. Finally released, I sprinted to catch up with the tour of the Foundation. We passed some mobile homes, and a collection of beautiful houses, all ecologically planned with insulation

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and solar panels, apparently using no heating of any kind. We saw meditation areas, administrative blocks, a Pottery, a weaving studio, a Printing Press. It seemed reminiscent of a communal farm - a kibbutz or kolkhoz - but with strong spiritual undertones. The highlight of the tour was the caravan where the founder of the Foundation, Eileen Caddy, had been told to go by spirit visitations. Instructed by these angels about fifty years ago, Eileen founded a farm on the barren sanddunes, where, to the amazement of the sceptical Scottish locals, a fertile market garden then arose.

Muttering in awe, my fellow guests immediately began taking pictures of Eileen's home. Next we visited the famous Cullerne gardens, where giant vegetables and flowers, are grown with love for Community use.

There were loads of strange happenings during the week. In one group we were asked to walk around a garden with our eyes closed, making odd noises while trying to avoid a sprinkler going at full pelt nearby. People broke down and sobbed in these sharing sessions. But I kept my eyes open at all times, (to avoid getting burnt or walking into icy irrigation systems,) and concentrated on the dancing. This was brilliant, always with live music, and a mixture of Scottish, Gypsy, Balkan, and Armenian. We packed in about six hours a day, with Gypsy and Balkan dancing every night.

One of the community leaders had a birthday during the week, and invited us all to his celebration. A tiramisu was piped in, and his friends from the Foundation sang ballads, and told anecdotes about him. We then had a Ceilidh in the hall, joined by locals from the nearby village. Stripping the Willow becomes even more hilarious when danced with Germans who can't quite understand what's going on, and when the men's line is mainly comprised of women. "Sie ist keine Man, nicht wahr?"

We danced on the green one morning in tropical Scottish sunshine to the marvellous music of Xenos, and I walked to the local village one afternoon where I met loads of down to earth and sociable locals. Some of these turned up next day for the Belly Dancing session given by the wellknown teacher, Laura Shannon. Laura has a unique style, her dancing interspersed with thoughtful pauses and soft comments about thanksgiving for music and peace through dance. I do basically agree with this, but have a problem with silence in public places, so had to frequently clamp down my tendency to burst into hysterical laughter. I get the same thing when the London Underground stops in a tunnel, so it's nothing personal against the Findhorn philosophy, just some fault in me. But it was great to hear Eastern music throb through Universal Hall. The Scottish locals arrived in full regalia, coin headdresses and floaty skirts and scarves.

Had the chance to show off when Universal Hall was transferred into a Jazz Cafe one evening, and my housemate Gerda invited me to dance. We went mad, free dancing in the huge empty space, quite a luxury after the tyranny of set dances and the normal shuffling caused by 300 people moving in a confined space. Boy, that was great, wild movements and leaps. Stunned silence greeted our performance. This was the night I met a Russian who had turned up to join in the ENGLISH IN THE COMMUNITY course. I couldn't really find out much about him as the jazz singer was really belting it out.

We did a bit of Bulgarian singing too, in a Xenos led workshop, but as we had all been asked to take off our shoes, and the guy who led the course stomped around in heavy boots dangerously near our feet, it wasn't too relaxed. Fun though. Don't you just love having to yell something at the top of your voice on your own as part of a warmup session?

For me the week was completely odd and wonderful. A very strange experience, but I'm so glad I went to see this place which is apparently so well known overseas, but which few of my British friends have heard of.

It was interesting to learn and practice loads of languages, and my experience was complete on the way home when I sat next to a Chinese couple on the plane whose English language was nix. Although I've forgotten most of my Mandarin, I was able to order two cups of tea with extra sugar for them. And dear Derek was waiting at Heathrow with his lovely smile, and suddenly I was home again, in the middle of this sane rational London world where bombs explode and rucksacks might contain deadly substances, and armed police patrol the local supermarket.

S.I. SIFD SUNDAY DANCES/WORKSHOPS at Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Road, N.W.1

Oct.2nd "Noughties" Dance. M.C.s: Those with significant birthday dates in 2005 - Caspar Cronk, Fiona Howarth Pam Radford

Nov.6th M.C.s: Helen Ezra and Derek Bugbee

7.00-10.00 p.m. Admission: £5.00 SIFD members, £7.00 non-members.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Lily,

A few months ago, Alison Scrimshaw wrote about the Danish group Vordingborg Spillemandsdragt coming to England, and this got Alan Cant talking to Alison about the time they visited us in Borough Green.

It was in 1979 that they came to England and in the November before that they had written to the S.I.F.D. to ask for groups that they could visit. We were one of the groups that replied and we arranged a full day with them. They would arrive mid-morning and would spend the afternoon in a dance swap workshop. We would then treat them to a fish and chip supper before holding a dance in the evening.

They arrived on a coach and came in with costumes and various instruments for their band. They had half a dozen or so musicians and when they played you just wanted to get up and dance, whether you knew the dance or not! During the evening they performed a few demonstrations in costume - one with large wooden rakes! It was a very enjoyable day.

We started planning to go and visit them in 1980 but at the time it was too expensive for us so we didn't go. We still keep in touch by Christmas card every year. Below is a photo of the group.

DAVID MCKIE
Secretary of Woodvale International Folkdance Group



"A Spell in Time" produced a delightful programme consisting of parts of an epic Bulgarian folk tale, rituals, music and dance at the All Saints Arts Centre in Whetstone, North London. It is part of a tour funded by The Arts Council England Lottery Programme. The remarkable stories retold here have been translated by Paraskeva Armstrong, the director Moni Sheehan's gracious mother.

If you love Balkan and particularly Bulgarian music then this performance will bring alive and put in context some of the songs and dances you have learned and may inspire you to find out more. Even if you are unfamiliar with this country and its culture, you will be introduced to something special.

Some of you may know Moni Sheehan, the director, from other performances by "A Spell in Time" but she also sings with Dessi Stefanova's London Bulgarian Choir. Some of you may have seen her at Balkanplus parties. She trained as a dancer at Middlesex University.

I first saw Moni perform with Dessislava Stefanova and Ivor Davies at the Camden Ceilidh about five years ago. Their performances combine dark and light in breath-taking but equal measure. I still recall one particular tale in which a woman cuts off one of her breasts to feed to her (unsuspecting) husband after the cat had eaten the chicken she had prepared for their supper. (Afterwards her still unsuspecting husband says that it was delicious and asks for more!). But although the content of the stories may sometimes be bloody and gruesome, we are not left feeling terrified.

This time the stories retold by Moni were about the exploits of King Marko (Krali Marko) and his talking horse Sharkoliya. Blood spilling, graphic descriptions of slaying from top to tail, impossible but heroic feats swimming through storm-tossed seas, barrenness, death and loss combine with music, song and dance about Bulgarian rituals for the good health of humans and horses, and rituals celebrating birth, marriage and the summer solstice. Images of the dawn, sun and stars, forest and water nymphs and various plants add to the folk tale ambience. Moni explained: "On St.Enyo's Day, marking the summer solstice, medicinal plants are at their most potent: cranesbill for all round good health, sweet basil for eternal love, marigold to cure sleeplessness and cowslip to banish evil spirits".

Moni, dressed in traditional Bulgarian costume (as are the others), narrates the tale with mesmerising charm, luring the listener on dangerous rides into the darkness and out the other side into light, eventually. As she declaims, she sways in time with the horse and beguiles us with her smile. She and singer Dessi with her spine-tingling voice combine in song and dance to enact some Bulgarian rituals in which they entice a willing audience (inviting us on one occasion to walk under an arc of flowers for good health). Dessi's songs reflect and enhance the mood, moving effortlessly from the dancing delight of a young maiden or nymph to heart-piercing laments. Ivor, playing on his customised harp and drum provides the atmosphere of foreboding and storms, and the rhythm of the galloping horse bearing its hero over land and sea. Boris Komitski, guest for this performance, plays haunting melodies on the kaval (Bulgarian wooden flute). The gudoulka is played alternately by Ivor and Dessi. This is a small stringed instrument about the size of a violin. The strings are stopped with the musician's finger nails (hence its other name as nail fiddle). Although a bow is also used, the gudoulka, unlike the violin, is held upright in front of the chest.

One point to note is that although as children we are brought up listening to folk tales (less often these days?), the players recommend that the tales are best appreciated by children over the age of twelve. Younger children may not understand or may even be frightened by the stories (though it could be argued that stories like Red Riding Hood are equally horrific, and some argue that children like scary stuff). The story-telling is spread over a couple of hours

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(with an interval). It is well paced and spaced with dances, singing and music. My twelve-year-old daughter and her Japanese friend of the same age were entranced throughout. The sheet of background information and the programme notes for each piece were helpful and interesting (but may need further explanation to twelve-year-olds).

The group tours the country so check the website www.spellintime.fsnet.co.uk
You can be assured of an uplifting and magical night out.

HELEN DE BRAY



YVES MOREAU BULGARIAN WORKSHOP, 10TH & 11TH SEPTEMBER 2005

Yves Moreau returned to London after four years absence, to lead a weekend workshop of Bulgarian dances. There was a good variety of regional dances with varying complexity. Yves has a clear and well-paced teaching style which ensured that the dances were learnt and enjoyed by all. The relaxed atmosphere was accompanied by anecdotes and background information from Yves' many field trips. No rest in the interval as we were encouraged to try and sing some of the songs as well.

The evening dance party was led by Maddy Chapman and John Riley with live music by Dunav. Dances included some revision of the day's workshop plus a general Balkan mix. Many costumes were on show which added to the happy atmosphere. I should like to take this opportunity to thank both Brian Dowsett and Frances Horrocks for all their hard work and organization which ensured the success of the weekend.

MAUREEN FELTON

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YVES MOREAU WEEKEND

For those of you who were unable to come, you missed a treat. Yves gave us a variety of dances from all regions, with beautiful music to match, and all taught in his own inimitable, easily followable style, captured on video by John Riley. At the end of the course, presents and praise were heaped on Yves but in the general euphoria there was a grave omission which was to thank Brian Dowsett for all his hard work for many months behind the scenes in arranging dates, acting as host and chauffeur and checking the bookings with Cecil Sharp House! If an event runs smoothly it is always due to the attention to detail and work of the organiser, so a big thank you to Brian for this highly successful weekend. Thanks are also due to Margaret Smith who gives up many hours of valuable dancing time taking the tickets on the door, not only this past weekend but for many months past.

As many of you will be aware, Wilf's health is now deteriorating both physically and mentally, so after more than twenty years on the Balkanplus Committee I feel the time has come to resign. Thank you, Committee members, for the "must have" CDs of Bulgarian music and please welcome Maureen Felton and Andrew Hardwick as secretary and treasurer respectively, both from the Ipswich group, who have bravely agreed to take over these roles.

Best wishes to all.

FRANCES HORROCKS

WHAT'S ON IN OCTOBER

- S.I. Oct.1st SIFD WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH AUTUMN DAY COURSE with Janet Woolbar. 10.30 to 4.30 at St.Giles Church Hall, Church Road, Sheldon (Just North of A45, near airport). Lunchbreak 1.00-2.00 p.m. Branch A.G.M. 1.30 p.m. SIFD members £7 full day, £4 half day. Non-members £8/£5. Details from Maggie Kaye, 0121 608 1437.
- Oct.1st/2nd MACEDONIAN & SERBIAN COURSE at Bognor Regis has been cancelled.
- S.I. Oct.8th BALKANPLUS. See p.4.
- Oct.9th DANCES FROM THE GREEK ISLANDS AND CRETE with Georgina Kyrris in Nottingham. Optional Greek feast and Paniyiri (festival) in the evening. Full details from Chrisandra Harris, 0115 9554962.
- S.I. Oct.14th to 16th FESTIVAL DES PANARDS, Otley Civic Centre, near Leeds. Friday: French & Breton Bal, 8 p.m. Saturday: French Bal, 7.30 p.m., French, Breton, Gascon Dance & Music workshops from 10 a.m. at Civic Centre and Otley Court House. Sunday: from 11 a.m. free music and dance session at Korks Wine Bar, Otley. Lunch £5 to be booked ahead. Contact: Yannick on 01274 833473.
- S.I. Oct.15th DANCES FROM EASTERN EUROPE led by Marina Wolstenholme, organized by Nutbrook IFDG at Stevenson School, Stapleford, Nottingham. 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. £7 (£4 half day). Dances: Doi in hora de la Teregova (Romania), L'amița (Romania), Hidhe moj hidhe këmbën'o (Albania), Ovčepolsko Potrčulka (Macedonia, ex-Yug.), Začko (Macedonia, Greek), Sassna Polzare (Armenia), Pravo from Černomorec (Bulgaria), Pazardžik'ska Kopanica (Bulgaria). For further information ring 01332 701922 or 0115 9171831. Soft shoes, please, not hard as on the leaflet.
- Oct.15th DAY COURSE & DANCE, CLASSIC OLDER ISRAELI DANCES with Roberto Haddon 11.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. with breaks for lunch and late afternoon, at St.Marks Primary School, Aylesbury Road, Bromley (Near Bromley South station and Bromley High Street). Dances which don't often get taught but are a foundation stone in the Israeli dance tradition. Bring own lunch or eat out. Drinks available. Parking space. Cost for whole day £20 including refreshments. For information/booking contact Christine Edgington, 020 8444 1502.
- Oct.15th & 16th "DANCE AROUND THE WORLD". See September SIFD NEWS.
- S.I. Oct.21st RAINMAKERS ANNIVERSARY DANCE with Jill Bransby and "Cloudburst". 8.00 to 11.00 p.m. at St.Michael's Parish Hall, Broadway, Letchworth, Herts. Only £5 for a fun-filled evening featuring a wide variety of dances for all abilities. A plate of food to share would be appreciated but not essential. For further information/directions, call Jill Bransby on 01462 457791.
- Oct.28th to 30th RESIDENTIAL COURSE OF ARMENIAN FOLK DANCE with Tineke Van Geel at Brecon, South Wales. Comfortable en-suite accommodation, full board, heated indoor pool. Choice of General or Advanced course or both courses. Delightful area for valley and mountain walking. Non-dancing friends and family welcome. Full board accommodation £118. Each course £17. For full details and booking from please send s.a.e. to Cathy Meunier, 115 Chetwynd Road, London NW5 1DA