

Society for International Folk Dancing

# SIFD News



October 2020

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Packaging, posting and electronic distribution is done by Dalila Heath.

This month's cover is from a photo of Pam Radford and Sue Clark which I took at the 2004 Summer School in Swansea, both wearing costumes from neighbouring villages in Thailand; another random holiday photo (from Greece, 2007) is on the back page. I have adapted part of Fiona's diagram (page 17) for Uriya to make this month's motif.

**Ed.**



**CIO**

Dear Janet,

It was good to read in the August News that SIFD is now incorporated as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). That may not seem very important to most members, and why should it. But it's certainly good for the Society. It's been a long haul, first achieving the decision to do it and then going through the red tape to get the new status established. Having been through this with two other bodies as chair I give my hearty congratulations to the Committee. Well done and best wishes!

**Roger Sturge**



### **Afternoon Dance in Pulborough**

I have booked the **very large** main hall of Pulborough Social Centre, Swan View, Lower Street, Pulborough, West Sussex, RH20 2BF for the afternoon of **December 6th**. 1pm - 4pm. Cost £5.

We shall dance international, non-contact folkdances, in their true form (to the best of our abilities) from many countries. If you wish to share a dance, that doesn't breach the tiresome rules of our times, please contact me in advance (*address opposite*) so that I can compile a tidy plan for the afternoon.

D.I.Y. refreshments will be provided - for solitary souls in the kitchen - who each obliterate the evidence of their own visit.

**Janet Douglas**

## Socially Distanced Folk Dancing

No more Do-si-do's, no more holding hands

No more turn your partner, no more arm-in-arm

No more ballroom hold, no more swing your partner

What to Do??

Dancers are desperate to dance again after six months! It's what keeps them happy, healthy and fit.

The answer - Adaptation. Apologies to SIFD and Tradition, but nowadays, just dancing any way you can, is more important than sticking to the traditional steps. The Royal Ballet has just advertised a programme of 'Distanced Dancing'. There'll be no pas de deux nor pas de trois. No beautiful, perfect line of the Corps de Ballet fitting closely together in perfect symmetry.

I met a Tango friend sitting outside the pub next door to us. He was busy chatting up some lady and had obviously had quite a few drinks already. He couldn't stop kissing my hand and arm, something he had never done before. I asked how he was coping and had he done any Tango lately (stupid question really - how does one dance socially distanced Tango!). He nearly cried. He had last danced in March and he used to dance twice a week. It's the same with Salsa, Merengue, Bachata, Kizomba and of course Ballroom. They will all have to change to Line dancing. I suggested he come and do some Socially Distanced Folk dance with my group. Of course he wouldn't. Most of those who do the above dances think Folk dance is 'old fashioned, tame, for old people, etc.'

The Iberian Folk Dance & Song Society are lucky enough to be allowed to practice in St John's at Waterloo church. We have already had our third session in this huge church. Our 14 dancers are well spaced out and the ladies there are very friendly. There are also huge grounds where we could practice before and after our allotted time as long as the weather permits. We can only afford to pay for one and a half hours. Our dancers were so happy to meet again and to dance. Many were sluggish and rusty as regards dance memory, having not danced for nearly six months.

So what do we do? How do we manage Socially Distanced Folk Dance?

Dancing around in a circle holding hands - just don't hold hands.

Everyone in a circle moving inwards and then back to your place - reverse

it so everyone backwards first and then inwards to your place.

Two lines facing each other crossing over - everyone crosses slightly to the left or right as long as everyone does the same direction and the same to come back to place. All's well if you're crossing straight back to your place. If you need to do something else first, weird things happen.

For instance in Zozo Dantza, a Basque dance:

Pas de Basque twice facing front, 3 jumps on the spot then face partner

Pas de Basque once, then once more as you cross to your partner's place.

If you all veer left (or right) to maintain distance, the lines end up far from each other. As the dance progresses you cannot face your partner again as there is now an empty space in front of you. In fact you will never get back to your partner! So What's the point. I made changes:

No crossing over so we stay in our formation. Instead of a turn under your partner's arm, your turn by yourself on the spot. Instead of dancing through the middle of the arch with your partner (very close), you dance down the outside of the arch. You run in a curve avoiding proximity with the person in front of you but curve inwards back into the line at the front. I can see this looks complicated on paper but it will make sense to those who know the dance.

The Portuguese circle dance Erva Cidrera is out. Without the placing of your right hand over the left shoulder of the person in front who gives you the left hand to hold, the fun is lost. The magic of the 'grapevine' look is so important to this dance especially when you change direction without letting go of hands. So this dance is definitely not adaptable.

The same with the Portuguese dance Indo Eu. Instead of arm in arm you can just circle around each other but at the end you need to join arms to move around strongly with bigger steps in order to end up on your partner's place. Then everyone has a new partner. It will look 'tame' without this last step done properly.

Many dances are out but there are enough that need no change at all or just minimal changes. You can still have fun sessions where you can dance, laugh, chat, keep the body fit and the memory, including muscle memory alert. Clapping each other's hands is difficult. For the more agile, you could step forward with one foot while stretching out the back leg, bend slightly over to meet the hands of the other one bending and stretching! Don't try this at home unless you are very fit!

PTO

You could end up with back and leg pain. We don't do this.

However we use sticks for Vira das Cavacas (Portuguese). The sticks give extra length so we can hit at the tips. It is quite a challenge. There are lots of shouts of 'keep back', 'you're too close', 'move', 'go away', all coupled with lots of laughing. There is a longer distance to cross over in the 'curve' so there is just time to cross over and turn back again.

Of course we have to sanitize our hands, sign the register, give our phone numbers for 'Track & Trace', only use the designated space for all our belongings, which will be sanitized when we leave. Then there's the Loo. One designated toilet has a notice on the outside and inside is sanitizer, wipes and instructions. Hopefully everyone follows the rules.

St John's is desperate for more people to use the church as they need the money to keep going. So many groups have not returned. It's been six months already. Many theatres, concert halls, venues, cinemas are in the same situation and are desperate for help. Much is being done online, some free and some for a small fee. Hopefully the Government will help these people from the 'never ending pot of gold'.

Unesco's Centre for International dance says this:

1. Do not give up. Dance is a vital necessity. It has endured all kinds of calamities since humanity began. It will flourish again soon. Show that you are confident and dedicated. Let others abandon, you are here for the long haul.
2. Intensify advertising and promotion. Open accounts on all social media, work on them, seeking followers actively. Focus on how your school offers better than others.
3. Mention hygiene practices: washing hands frequently, wearing face masks, or transparent shields, keep two metre distance between dancers, install open circuit air conditioning or strong ventilators, disinfect handles, floors dressing rooms.
4. Start small group classes or individual teaching. Listen to the fears of dancers or their parents and find ways to accommodate them. Better to operate below cost than to lose students.

When this pandemic ends, if it ever does, we will have to relearn how to do some of our dances properly again. Good for the brain!

**Elsa Perez** (Iberian Folk Dance & Music Society)

## Sue Clark

Dear Janet,

Thanks for the various tributes to Sue. We have three small bits to add. When she was in Newport we used to see quite a bit of her and some of her colleagues in the early days of the Bristol group. They were a welcome support.

Later, when she was in Pembrokeshire our son Alan was in Withybush Hospital at Haverford West for a few weeks having smashed up his legs climbing at St Govan's Head. Sue and members of her group visited him. His surgeon was a member of the group and on at least one occasion his bed was wheeled out to be with the group having their weekly class.

She was always a lively presence in her wonderful costume at the summer school, with Vic running the stall.

Dear Tiggerish Sue, we'll miss her.

**Hilda & Roger Sturge**



## Coomber

Dear Janet,

Does anyone have use for a Coomber amplifier? Now that the Bristol group has faded away, leaving only a faithful remnant of Balkan specialists who, until Covid-19, met to share dances in our dining room, the only purpose for our faithful Coomber is to add to the clutter in our hall. It's a long shot as it only plays cassette tapes, but it does have variable speed, a microphone and a blue canvas carrying bag (very elegant, if a little frayed at the edges). So if you think you could find a home for it, I'm sure we could find a way of getting it to you. Otherwise it will have to go to the graveyard of all electrical goods at the Amenity Site.

**Hilda Sturge**



## **That's Life**

I spent Summer with my Granny,  
On her farm in Donegal.  
She took me to a hootenanny  
In the local village hall.  
I was a reluctant teen  
But Oh! the music and the craic,  
My conversion, it was damascene,  
Never, never looking back.  
Granny said, 'Come back next year.'  
She, sadly, passed away,  
And I went back to Clacton  
And another rainy day.

Notes: Hootenanny, a party with folk singing and dancing, principally but not exclusively Scottish, (and an irresistible rhyme for Granny). Craic, fun, an enjoyable activity (pronounced crack). Damascene of a conversion, sudden and dramatic as that of St. Paul on the road to Damascus.

**Simon Guest**



## **Moon Over Vyhodna**

This poem was written in 1982, at a time when the Czech group Beskydy visited Czechoslovakia and visited festivals etc. in particular Vyhodna. I remember that we girls were fascinated with the dance of the bare-chested shepherds - very sexy! One evening their dancers joined us in a picnic on a hillside. This poem was the result!

I don't think that any of the Beskydy group ever saw this poem - so it may come as a surprise!

My only other poem about dance, is about Swing-jive or African dancing jazz style so probably not suitable for this magazine.

Sadly, I've lost contact with the International dance scene - but have wonderful memories. I was also a member of the Balalaika Dance group for many years. Warmest wishes to all.

**Didi Elizabeth M. Crook**



## Moon Over Vyhodna

One moment - inward, isolated, tired  
half-alert to living -  
following others,  
uncertain,  
lost in my own half-awake world.

Then - a shout,  
like a light being switched on,  
then arms loosely encircling me  
but impelling me to move, to swirl, to hear  
the compelling music.

Energy charged from a vibrant  
dancing body,  
Energy charged from a vibrant  
dancing soul,  
flowed

straight  
into my sluggish spirit,  
causing some inner response  
akin to the rising sap of a tree in springtime -  
which, once flowing, refused to be dammed back  
by past inhibitions.

My Soul experienced the release of a prisoner,  
and the encircling arms were life  
reaching out for me, my-self -  
calling me to come back to Life  
again  
and again.

That was no ordinary dance,  
no common energy felt on a happy evening.  
Others may mock about the wine,  
the silly jokes,  
the rough hillside grass,  
but only I know that  
in the dark, under the moon  
Life itself had danced the Czardas with me  
and found me good.

# **An Incomplete Guide to Indian Dancing**

## **Part 3 Manipuri**

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) Indian writer - of poems, novels, plays, letters, short stories and songs; also musician and artist.

Although one of those pupils who are always "trying" at school, (in fact, in the end he was educated mainly at home) his great ambition was to found an international university to study the different cultures and religions of the world to promote "that mutual sympathy, understanding and tolerance on which alone can the unity of mankind rest". This mighty man of letters was also interested in dancing - in the Manipuri style - as he came from Bengal, and this style of dancing is found east of the Ganges delta.

After the general decline of dancing throughout India, it was Tagore who did much to revive it. He invited one of the greatest dancers, Naba Kumar, to teach pupils so that the art would not be lost. Now Tagore believed himself to be a very discerning critic, and he codified all that he thought best, and rejected what he disliked. Thus, he has had great influence on this dance school as seen in the present day.

This style of dancing is, for the girls, extremely soft, graceful and lyrical. One of the most popular dances is the Ras-Leela, showing that mischievous young god Krishna flirting with the milk maids. He plays his flute and flits among them so skilfully that each believes he is interested only in her (poor deluded damsel). This dance, needless to say, can go on for hours.

Manipuri dances are usually performed in the springtime and are connected with nature and harvests. Legend has it that the tribes were suffering from famine brought about by evil spirits. The tribal chief had a vision in which he was told that these evil spirits could be banished through song and dance, which would make other gods look favourably upon them. Everybody joined together in celebration, putting the evil spirits to flight, and resulting in a rich harvest.

The girls have a most beautiful eye-catching costume which glitters and sparkles, as on it are sewn tiny pieces of mirror and myriads of sequins. A girl wears a bright coloured silk skirt with the bottom 18 inches or so stiffened so that when she spins round this part hangs straight down.



This stiffened part bears the design of mirrors and sequins. Over this long skirt she wears a half skirt of gauze and silver thread which also catches the light. Her blouse is the short, tight-fitting, draughty midriff variety as in Bharat Natyam. Her hair will be done up in a bun on the side of the head and covered with a gauze and silver-thread veil. Of course, there are the usual jewels, bells, and bare feet.

A man wears a dhoti - a sort of long loin cloth, with embroidered bands crossing his shoulders and chest ending in flaps that hang over both hips.

If he represents Krishna, then his dhoti will be of gold or yellow silk, and he will wear a vast amount of jewellery round his neck and on his arms. He, too, will have bells and bare feet.

Dancing may be accompanied by an instrument rather like a guitar called a Khol, and by drums often strapped round a man so that he may dance and accompany himself also. Being a much more leisurely style the dancers often sing while performing, though there may be a separate chorus who do not dance. For the male drummer - dancer there are some extremely hectic solo dances, but, perhaps because of their liveliness, or perhaps because of lack of girls, one does not often see them performed.

Next month we go south, for the last of these humble offerings, to the home of Kathakali.

**Bhayji**

## **Bexhill IFDG**

Sadly, 5th March 2020 turned out to be the last evening that members of the group danced together.

Lily Avery, having taught, danced with several specialist groups in London, performed in many costumed demos and enjoyed the delights of SIFD weekends, such as Surrey Crest, settled for the quiet life in Sussex in the 1990s.

On 3rd September 1993 we founded Bexhill IFDG in the hope that we could attract enough dancers for a year or two - so 26½ years is not too bad a record.

Unfortunately Lily stopped teaching her wide range of dances in 2001 (though as many as possible, like Hora Nunului Mare, were kept in the programming) and had to give up dancing altogether in 2005. With her departure we became an affiliated group instead of associated. Although more or less housebound Lily retains a keen interest in dance as can be seen by her contributions to the News.

Luckily other members have been able to teach. Rowena Martin specialised in Israeli dances (she ran a monthly group in Lewes), Armenian, having attended courses with Tineke Van Geel in Armenia, and Russian dances taught by Hennie Konings. She emigrated to Australia in September 2018, a great loss.

Debbie Collins specialised in Balkan, especially Albanian (Cobankat and Valle Pogonishte were two of our favourites) and Romanian, having attended courses here and in Romania with Silviu Ciuciumis. She also spent some years in the Netherlands dancing with an international group in Leiden and introduced us to some of their less hearty dances.

English dances were regularly included in the programme, initially taught by Jack Carter, a local caller, who came from Seaford with his wife, Midge. When they could no longer make the journey Beryl Bidgood, formerly Hale, then Hartley, an accomplished clog dancer, caller and choreographer of some lovely flowing new English dances took over until her untimely death early in 2014.

I danced with Woodvale; Borough Green, for 8 years before moving to Bexhill and enjoyed many monthly SIFD Saturday courses in London as well as SIFD weekends.

I was lucky to travel to Yugoslavia with Ken Ward and Zivko Firfov in 1978.

I liked to keep Couple dances and sets in the mix. In our heady days (a long time ago!) we had 16 dancers occasionally so I was able to do Alewander - Switzerland, Le Branle du Moulin - Berry, and Jaunais Sturis - Latvia. I also had a soft spot for the slightly daft, like La Badoise, Italy, and the more exotic taught by Jan Knoppers, like Khanty Mansi - Siberia, Lagu Sopo Sopo - Moluccan Islands) and South American dances such as Bailecito and El Gato. Every Chinese New Year we danced Robert Harrold's Happy New Year. Dance of Reception - Taiwan, was popular too, mainly because a nameless one constantly turned the wrong way to everyone's glee.

When Rowena left, Silvia McIntyre, an accredited SIFD teacher, who also runs a group in Willingdon, stepped into the breach and introduced us to new dances from her wide repertoire. She specialises in Austrian, Balkan and Israeli dances and has taken over the Lewes group.

Many groups have made amazing efforts to keep dancing out of doors or using technology. I have always believed that dance is essentially a social pastime when people hold hands, link arms and dance with each other. I trust that once an effective vaccine is found for Covid-19 enough groups will survive to enjoy dancing together once more.

Time is not on the side of our small but very friendly group as age, health issues and declining numbers are of concern. Several members have danced from the beginning and most for a long time. Evenings have been great social occasions to enjoy each other's company, music and dance. However, all have agreed that dancing, for us, will never be the same and that we prefer to remember happier days.

**Heather Edwards**



## Cecil Sharp House

Since it was opened in 1930, Cecil Sharp House has been Britain's venue for folkdance and song. Funding its build was its trouble, the appeal lasted four years and raised £33,000, with it being ended by a donation of \$10,000 by Mrs. Helen Storrow, President of the American Society.

The next trouble arrived on the night of September 1940 when a bomb fell on the staircase, destroying part of the main hall, the musicians gallery and most of the upper floor. Much museum materials and recordings were lost, but the Library was saved. Some repairs allowed the main hall and the basement to be used as an office until after 1949 when permission for rebuilding was granted. (*photo shows bomb damage*)



The funds came from £20K war damage grant, a Ministry of Education grant of £10K, with members and friends taking the total to £53,000.

The rebuilt house was opened in June 1951 by H.R.H. Princess Margaret; in time for the Festival of Britain. As the rebuilding eliminated the musicians gallery, a further appeal resulted in £2,000 for the mural, at that time the largest painting in the U.K.

Ivon Hitchens, a landscape painter did it at cost in his bungalow in Sussex on eleven separate canvasses. It was first shown in June 1954.

As the original foundations were strong enough the rebuild gave a second floor with more accommodation and amenities.

A further trouble arose some years ago with a proposal to sell 'The House' and build another HQ in the midlands, but as the mural was listed grade 2 that proposal was handicapped.

The trouble now is that common to many venues and countries affected by Covid-19 restrictions.

**Roy Clarke**

## Footnotes to this article

1. The SIFD association with 'The House' came through Bert Price's relationship with Douglas Kennedy, who had broad interests in national dance; he was indeed most helpful. The extent of his help is not fully known, but included introductions to a number of authorities on national dance, resulting in groups being formed; increasing the repertoire and raising the standard of dance.
2. Cecil Sharp (James) 1859 - 1924. Born in London, studied at Cambridge, becoming a lawyer; but an interest in music especially folk song dominated, resulting with others eg Vaughan Williams, founding in 1898 the Folk Song Society. Boxing Day 1899, when staying with relatives at Headington; the Quarrymen arrived and danced. It was the vigour and liveliness of the music that impressed him. Later when asked to teach girls the dances associated with the music he turned to the Kimber family for help, leading in 1911 to the foundation of the Folk Dance Society with him as director.
3. There is much material available on all associated with EFDSS.



## Jelenka – North Norfolk Balkan Dancing on Zoom

There are currently a lot of opportunities to join in dancing in the comfort of your own home via Zoom, however each one has something different to offer. Some members of our group have been meeting regularly to dance via Zoom for some months now, and will be continuing for the foreseeable future. We have already been joined by dancers from Ipswich, London, Sheffield, Newcastle and even the Netherlands – and now we would like to invite anyone else who might like to join us! The weekly sessions are just 30 minutes long, usually early evening on weekdays and sometimes Saturdays. The day varies from week to week, which allows a variety of dancers to join. All dances are explained and we generally dance about 5 different dances in each session.

If you would like further details please send me an email – it's simple to join and is a great way to keep our dancing feet in action in these unusual times. [dawnwakefield7@gmail.com](mailto:dawnwakefield7@gmail.com)

**Dawn Wakefield**

to cheer us up:

## **Funnies via Rick Wakeman on "Countdown" 10 Oct 2007**

### **Answers were from 16yr olds!**

1. In Geography name the four seasons.

answer: Salt, pepper, mustard & vinegar!

2. Explain one of the processes by which water can be made safe to drink. answer: "Flirtation", because it removes large polutants like sand, dead sheep, grit and canoeists!

3. Sociology: What guarantees may a mortgage company insist on?

answer: If you are buying a house they will insist you are well endowed!

4. What are Steroids?

answer: They are things for keeping carpets still on stairs!

5. Biology: What happens to your body as you age?

answer: When you get old so do your bowels and you get intercontinental!

6. What happens to a boy when he reaches puberty?

answer: He says goodbye to his boyhood and looks forward to his adultery!

7. Name a major disease associated with cigarettes.

answer: Premature death!!

8. What is artificial insemination?

answer: When the farmer does it to the bull instead of the cow!!

9. How do you delay milk turning sour?

answer: Keep it in the cow!

10. What is a Fibula?

answer: A small lie!!

11. What is the most common form of birth control?

answer: Most people prevent contraception by wearing a condominium!!

12. What is a terminal illness?

answer: When you are sick at the Airport!!

13. What does the word 'benign' mean?

answer: 'Benign' is what you will be after you be eight!!

courtesy of **Iris Birch**



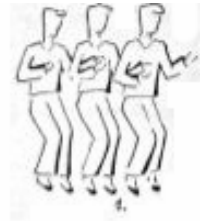
## Der Windmüller *(see last month)*

Der Windmill (Der Windmüller!) being danced on the lawn at Kemsing Youth Hostel about 1950, with Jack Richardson on the right and I think Cliff Beck's back on the left. Music was by Mourie Pfeffer.

Roy Clarke



## Debka Uriya



(In case you cannot read the numbers - I would like to point out that fig. 1 is in the top right hand corner, and numbers progress to the left, finishing with fig.5 at the bottom left hand corner.) **Ed.**

# Debka Ha'abir (Uria)

Israel

Fast

8 15

"Wilf Horrocks' Collection"



The dance Debka Ha'abir is better known as **Debka Uriya** [spelling from old record sleeve] It is one of the first dances created by Moshiko.

Moshiko comes from an old Yemenite family. He danced with Inbal the Yemenite Dance Theatre and there reinforced his experience of Jewish Ethnic dance.

In 1959 he created his first dances, one of which was Debka Uriya.

He uses the elements of Arabic men's dances which were done in close lines. I learned this dance from Jacky Barkan many years ago. He had learned it from Moshiko in Israel, and he was very particular about our steps, holds and the position of heads, arms etc.

I have a description of the steps but unfortunately they are in Hebrew from an old official Handbook of dances. There are the diagrams of the holds on the previous page.

**Fiona Howarth**



Next month the music for **Neudeutscher** from Austria... over to you **Ed.**



## **SIFD Committee**

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## NOTHING ON IN OCTOBER

### RAINMAKERS 44th ANNIVERSARY DANCE

We're sorry to announce that our Anniversary Dance in October has been cancelled due to Covid-19.

**Mark Balaam**  
Secretary  
Rainmakers International Folk Dance Group



*Events covered by SIFD insurance are marked S.I.  
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.*

*All material for the November issue of the SIFD NEWS must be  
received by the Editor in writing by 18th October.*