

SIFD NEWS



March 2021

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

The front cover picture shows the local costume from Bormio, Italy; it was one of a bundle of very old postcards Roy Clarke sent a couple of months ago. Sadly, the last of his many contributions to the News. A series of items from the 'Dictionary of the Dance' by W.G. Raffe were published in the SIFD News in the 60s; Acatlaxque is republished on page 5.

Ed.



Roy Clarke 1927 - 2021

Members will be very sorry to hear that Roy Clarke has died. He was very much part of the SIFD and known to many. I personally knew Roy for many years and my memories go a long way back.

He was, with me, part of the Harrow Green Folkdance Group, and apart from dancing I enjoyed his company on walking holidays, weekends spent in Youth Hostels around the country and also at Maldon in Essex where I spent a lot of time sailing with him in small sailing boats and also one holiday sailing a huge wherry on the Norfolk Broads.

In addition to his other activities many of our members will remember the very enjoyable dance weekends which Roy organised, so efficiently at some lovely venues, not only arranging and booking them but doing the cooking for all of us, cooking being one of his skills. He and I also went together occasionally to see a film at the National Film Theatre in London.

He was a quiet, unassuming chap but he 'had form'! He was arrested for speeding about two years ago while driving from my home in Bexhill to his in Enfield. He was doing 33mph in a 30mph zone! He was amused at his first-ever encounter with the law at 91 years of age and no doubt dined out on it. That day was the last time I saw him but we had frequent conversations on the phone and he never lost his interest in folkdance and the people he met there.

Another friend gone from our lives, but always remembered.

Lily Avery

*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 April issue of the SIFD NEWS must be received
by the Editor in writing by 18th March .*



SIFD Halsway Weekend 2021 CANCELLED

We are sorry to have to inform you that this year's event will not take place. When Ian rang to finalise the booking and pay the deposit, he was told that the temporary closure of Halsway had been extended past the date of our booking.

Ian has booked the 2022 Weekend of Fri. 29th April to Tues. 3rd May

Ian Green and Robin Morris



Roy Clarke

Roy was one of the stalwarts of the Society. Apart from his many contributions to the News, in the late 80s and 90s he organised weekends of walking and dancing. These were arranged in new places to explore such as Glastonbury, Hassocks and Battle in Sussex, Evesham and Cromford. One of his beautifully baked cakes was produced at teatimes. It was an honour to be invited to his Christmas house parties held at Charney Manor with games, music, dancing and outings provided by the participants.

Roy will be much missed, especially by those of us left who remember these enjoyable social weekends.

Heather Edwards

Dance Alphabet

Acatlaxque (Mexico) - 'Reed Throwing Dance'.

A dance of the Otomi Indians of Pahuatlan, Hidalgo, performed by about a dozen young men and 'Malinche' - a boy in a long white dress, holding a gourd containing a painted wood or articulated silver snake. The other dancers wear white cotton suits, red knee-length over-trousers; red kerchiefs tied crosswise over one shoulder and cone-shaped paper caps with streamers. Each carries his acatlaxque - a bundle of ten or twelve reeds lightly fastened together with slip knots and decorated with brilliant feathers. First, to the music of flute and drum, they perform intricate steps in two rows inside the church. Then in one long row, in the courtyard facing the open door, they advance and retreat with a hopping step, a bow and a turn. After this prelude the dance, centring round Malinche, begins. Forming a circle round her, while one man wriggles a snake over her head, they perform various figures, dancing out in ones and twos round her. Finally she is lifted on to a small wooden platform. The dancers step and, one by one, throw out their acatlaxque, so that the reeds extend telescopically to form a canopy over Malinche. This action is repeated several times, the reed dome rotating as the dancers move slowly round. This dance has pre-Conquest origins. Acatl ('Reed') was a day and year name in the Aztec calendar, and their fifty-two year cycles were called 'sheafs', represented by a glyph showing reeds bound into a bundle.



Acatlaxque Danza

The Bethnal Green Festival

I wonder how many of you remember the annual dance Festival usually around February which I absolutely loved. The festival took place in the Bethnal Green town Hall, from around 1960 I think. It was staged as a competition between the folk dance groups of different nationalities: Bulgarian, Czech, Greek, Hungarian, Russian, etc. Each group hoped to win the prized Folk dance cup awarded for the best performance. One year my school dance group won the Junior cup with an elaborate Russian dance with a snowman in it. Our group was the only entry for the Junior section!! At the end of the competition there was a huge feast given for all the dancers!



The Bethnal Green Festival could have been created before 1960 but I was only aware of it when my (then) husband, Bill Martin and I were very keen on Russian dance and were responsible for the Balalaika dance group at that time. We gave our first-born the name Galina after the most famous Russian dancer Galina Ulanova.

She became quite well-known later in life for Bulgarian dancing after she'd had the offer from the Bulgarian cultural society to spend three months in Sofia studying Bulgarian dancing. Later in 1971 I got the offer from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to study at the Lenin University in Moscow, where my greatest joy was to join the university

dance group. It was there that I learned the Russian Lyrical dance that I presented to the SIFD, and they took it into their repertoire.

below: Russian dance, early 80s



I made many friends there at the university dance group and one in particular, Valery Gusakov, helped me to get many unique experiences such as visiting the amazing island of Kizhi in a lake in Northern Russia where every building was made of wood, even the tiles of the church roofs, were of wood...



above: Russian dance with Narendra Kotiyan performing a solo

Galina and I were more active in the SIFD when we were dancing with Alan Maclean who was very well-known for Hungarian dancing. I belonged to the Balaton Dance Group for about 11 years and Galina was one of Alan's best dancers, and was chosen as his partner especially when it came to dancing for a program on television. My little band of girls (daughters Galina, Millie and Nina) used to spend the whole of the summer holiday camping and dancing with different dance groups in Hungary. We'd spend three days getting there, and three days to get back in my minibus sometimes with other members of the Balaton group and later when I remarried, with my husband Rick Beech, but always to spend almost five weeks in Hungary with Alan as our leader.

below - Alan Maclean performing a Hungarian dance.



What a fantastic proponent of Hungarian dancing he was. He will probably be known by SIFD members for taking on Roumanian dancing as well and travelling there in his later years to perfect his technique in that style of dancing.

What a wonderful time of life it was. My days in the classroom teaching languages were happy with the near certainty that my summer holidays were to be spent gaining more knowledge of Hungarian dancing in the country of origin.

Kathy Beech

(backcover: photo of Galina's Bulgarian team - costumes sent from Bulgaria)

May Heydays 2021 - cancelled

We will start planning for next year's festival in the autumn and will keep you updated on our plans as they take shape. One innovation we may try is offering some concerts as maybe people newly back to dancing won't want to dance all day long? If you have any other suggestions for 2022's programme, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Anyone who would now like a refund of 2020's carried forward ticket, please contact : tickets@mayheydays.org.uk.

Monty will contact you if he does not have your bank details (your name as it appears on your account, sort code and account number). But, if you have changed bank details, do advise him. Many of you agreed to donate a sum (say, 5%) to the festival last year; anyone who didn't and now wishing to do so, do let us know. Refunds requests can be made at any time and will be processed in the order they are received. Please allow some time for this; if we don't hear from you, monies will be held over for 2022.

Tel 01308 423 442

The May Heydays Team



Dockedansen



Dockedansen

Intro Sweden

7

13

20 Coda

"Wilf Horrocks' Collection"



I researched **Dockedansen** online and found a clip of four Swedish couples dancing it. All hands joined they circle left with a running step. Then holding inside hands, the first and third couples turn away from each other swinging their joined hands to the centre, and, then turn to face each other swinging their joined hands out of the circle. The same two couples then cross the circle to change places and repeat back to place. Circling is repeated then the other two couples do the same. Simple! (*photo on previous page*)



Does anyone know anything about the dance **Kehruuvalssi**? It is from Finland and will be featured in the April issue. **Ed.**





SIFD Committee

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NO EVENTS IN MARCH

