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March 2023

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

The front page shows embroidery on a Jordanian kaftan, back page Greek (page 13)

Jeanette Hull has written an interesting article on Polska, (page 6)

Ed.



I hope some members watched the re-run of the drama Fortunes of War on BBC 4 recently. If they did they will have recognised, in the main theme tune, the Music for Hora Femeilor.

When the programme first came out I bought the EP record of the music and later transferred it to CD. I have used this version in my class ever since - known to us as Hora Femeilor [Fortunes of War]

Does anyone else use this?

Fiona Howarth



Balkanplus

11th March in Trefusis, Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, Camden, NW1 7AY starting at 6.00pm - 9.00pm. Admission £10 (cash only please)

There will be multiple dance leaders plus live music with Dunav.

10th June Bulgarian Workshop with Boiko Andonov, from 11.00am-4.00pm followed by an evening dance 6.00pm-9.00pm, in Trefusis,

Admission £25 for the day, £10 for the evening or £30 for both.

Bank details available on request, or cheque payable to Balkanplus, 28 Henslow Road, Ipswich IP4 5EG. Any enquiries to maureen.felton@btinternet.com or our website www.balkanplus.org.uk

Maureen Felton

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

April 1: NUTBROOK DANCE WORKSHOP 11.00am – 3.30pm at Bramcote Memorial Hall Community Room, Nottingham, NG9 3HD. Enjoy and learn dances from many countries – led by Brenda and Phil Steventon. Everyone welcome, no partners needed. Cost: £8.00. For further information please contact Gill Morral on telephone 0115 9171831 or gill.morral@ntlworld.com

S.I **Apr.28-May.1: MAY HEYDAYS** with Dilyana Kurdova, early-bird tickets: £97pp weekend £20pp - camping. (Under 18s & students: £48 - camping £10) Stewards: £48 (including camping). Prices are valid until 31st January.
www.mayheydays.org.uk

S.I **Apr.28-May.1(2): SIFD HALSWAY MANOR WEEKEND** International Dance / walking weekend in Somerset. Evening dancing with Janet Woolbar & others leading and mainly live music. Daytime organised walks, informal dance w/shops with Maggie Kaye in the mornings - music & singing w/shops in the afternoons or / visit the area. Booking now - only non-ensuite rooms left! Contact: Ian Green 07934-909968 or email icgreen@tiscali.co.uk

S.I **June 10: BALKANPLUS BULGARIAN WORKSHOP** with Boiko Andonov, see page 3



*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.*



Dorridge Day Of Dance

Saturday 25th March 2023

Hello!

Although the Great Alne Long Weekend won't be taking place again this year, we are pleased to invite you to the second Dorridge Day of Dance on Saturday 25th March. We had a thoroughly enjoyable time last year, so please do come along and join in the fun!

There will be morning and afternoon sessions of International Folk Dancing (Balkan and Israeli dances) with Cathy Meunier, 10.30am - 1.00pm and 2.00 - 4.30pm.

In the evening we'll have English Folk Dancing led by Kim Smith and with music from The Cat's Whiskers, 7.00 to 10.00 pm.

Venue

Dorridge Village Hall, Grange Road, Dorridge, Solihull, B93 8QA (if following your satnav, look out for the Village Hall driveway). The venue is within easy reach of Birmingham, Solihull and the M42, and a short walk from Dorridge train station. Website: www.dorridgevillagehall.org

Refreshments

Hot and cold drinks and biscuits will be provided throughout the day. Please bring a packed lunch. There are various eateries in the area for those taking part in the daytime sessions and staying on for the evening dance.

Prices

Morning and afternoon sessions £8.00 each or £15.00 for both. Evening dance £8.00. Whole day including evening dance £20.00. Pay on the door. It would be appreciated if you could let us know if you are coming – but you will be most welcome anyway!

For more information, please contact Paul Lindley: email paul.lindley69@blueyonder.co.uk or phone 0121 689 1802 or 07913 615002.

Paul Lindley

Polska

a traditional couple dance and a name in some choreographed performance dances

The item in the January News quoting the Allenby-Jaffe book was interesting and Richard's letter last month reminded me of how knowledge and practice of dances named "polska" has developed since that book was written. I have been slow to write this because everything I found led to more reading and google rabbit holes.

It's a shame that as time has gone on that the SIFD's dance repertoire has been collected and spread without passing on much information about the origins of any dances. We have learned many dances without knowing whether they are from a continuous local tradition, have been re-constructed from a broken tradition, have been created to add to a repertoire of recreational "folk dances" or were made for a theatrical performance.

There are Swedish dances with "polska" in their name that were taught within the SIFD from the 1940s onwards by Pug Cyriax and others. They are entertaining to watch, with many figures and little repetition, but while they use elements of older traditional dances, they are not themselves traditional dances. Many were created in the 19th century or early 20th century for performances and later taught as "folk" dances in Sweden. Some are named by prefixing "polska" with the name of a region. Information about the original sources of those dances has since been published more widely.

Starting in the 1880s a dance group named "Philochoros" at the University of Uppsala created dances for theatrical performance based on elements of traditional dance. Typical characteristics of these dances include a fixed number of people and a complicated sequence with little repetition; all of which make them a good choice for performance, but not much fun at a social event for people who have not memorised the dances.

For example, Fjällnåspolska is listed in Svenska Folkdanser as a Philochoros creation, with a note that the music is a "dalpolska" which would mean a polska from Dalarna. However, even though it is called polska the only couple turn it has is a hambo.

In the same book Vingåkersdansen and Daldans are noted as being created by the ballet master Anders Selinder in the 19th century for theatre shows.

Philochoros 1880 - 1976



“Vingåkersdans.” A composed dance from the middle of the 19th century, made for the Opera Ballet. This picture from the Philochoros archives was taken during the society’s tour in 1899, and shows three men (two of them are dressed up as women) dancing the dance. During the first 40 years only men could join the society.

The original “Polska” is a couple dance. There are a great variety of related dances including Polska and Slangpolska (Sweden), Pols, Rull, Springleik, Springer, Gangar (Norway) and Sonderhoning and Springdans (Denmark). Most have a walking forward section and a turning section, some have further elaborations. In most of them each couple is free to choose for themselves how much time to spend on each part.

The Danish Sonderhoning does both the walked part and the three-step turn to 2/4 music. The Swedish polska and Norwegian springer and pols use a 3/4 time that feels nothing at all like a waltz, with scope to step only on two of the beats or on all three. Hambo is a more recent introduction with a fixed length sequence.

continued overleaf>

Since the 1970s or earlier the Philochorus repertoire has focused on the traditional couple dances, describing them in an English language information sheet for a tour of the USA as “genuine” and “real” dances and saying that the made up performance dances are kept only as curios as part of Sweden’s folk dance history.

The Allenby-Jaffe book mentions Polsk Dans in the 17th and 18th centuries in Denmark, in two parts: a “promenademarch” in duple time and a “springdans” in triple time and sometimes a third part. There is also a reference to a 16th century safety warning about the dangers of turning too violently in such couple dances.

Since the early 1990s some SIFD members and many others have enjoyed learning the couple dances at weekend workshops here and at courses and festivals in Scandinavia and in the USA.

To find videos of the traditional polskor and similar dances try searching youtube for “polska fran Bingsjö” , “polska fran Orsa” , “Boda polska” , “släng polska” once you find one there will be suggestions for many more! This link will take you to a video made at a polska course in Sweden. The teachers dancing in the video are Tommy and Ewa who taught at York in 1992 and inspired the formation of the “Scandia” dance group in London (the quality is not great but the very sharp eyed might spot Richard Mellish and Alix Cordray filming in the background) .

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5On2wekY2g>

You may also come across people teaching a generic polska that can be a starting point to enable beginners to join in a social dance evening. Differences between styles of tune can be subtle, and finding a dance that works for some music is more about how it is played than it being a particular melody. It’s common to see several different polska variants being danced at the same time, depending on each couple’s preferences or knowledge.

The old traditional and re-constructed polska dances have surged in popularity: I have seen large numbers dancing them as social dances at festivals and in the late evening at the open air museum at Skansen. This year a polska weekend in England was sold out less than two hours after booking was opened!

Sources:

Glad I at Dansar Bill Gooch, USA a collection of notes for over 100 mostly Swedish dances, including more than 60 polska variants

Beskrivning av Svenska Folkdanser Svenska Ungdomsringen for Bygdekultur

Folk Dance of Europe Nigel Allenby Jaffe

Norden I Dans Egil Bakka and Gunnel Biskop (editors)

Philochorus' website : <https://philochoros.se>

A brochure from Philochoros for their 1976 USA tour :

<https://philochoros.se/w/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/USA-76.pdf>

My ability to translate Swedish is limited, but improving - once I am sure of my understanding of more the information about the origins of particular dances in the SIFD repertoires I will share it.

Jeanette Hull



Gjirokaster Folk Festival



The Gjirokaster Folk Festival in southern Albania will be held from 24th June to 1st July 2023.

Penny Munden

Frith Folk



A group called Frith Folk have been dancing for a few decades now, recently being led by Sally Auld and the late Sheila Hibbs.

We meet at the Chapel-en-le-Frith Methodist Church Hall on a Thursday evening and through the lockdowns were able to soldier on by dancing (with plenty of distance and ventilation) at a local Sailing Club and later, outside in the Church Hall community gardens.

This is a photograph taken a couple of weeks ago when we were about to dance Vrapceto and it was Rosemary's (far right) last attendance with us before she emigrates to Australia.

Ruth Gay





SIFD Archives and Members' Handbook

For many years Tony Latham kept an archive of various material relevant to SIFD. A few years ago it was transferred to the care of Dalila Heath, but we suspected that it might not all deserve to be kept indefinitely.

Recently some of us finally commenced a review of the material. We may identify some items as of no value to the Society but possibly worth offering to individual members, but we are not yet ready for any such announcement as the review is likely to need several more days over the next several months.

We have already found copies of SIFD News going back to the very early years: these are to be scanned for inclusion in the Society's electronic Archive, so watch this space for when we are ready to announce an update to that.

One other item of interest is a letter from Frances Brown, who was Member No. 2, with an account of the dancing in wartime that led to the SIFD's formation. Its content is included at the end of the second edition of the SIFD Members' Handbook.

Whether or not you still have your copy of the original printed edition (with a pink cover), if you don't yet have the new edition we commend it for your attention. It will be on the SIFD website as a pdf. We may be able to print copies for any members who can't deal with pdfs.

Richard Mellish



Halsway Manor Open House:

Musicians Retreat

In January 2023, I was lucky enough to attend Halsway Manor Open House, a five day retreat for professional folk artists at all stages of their careers wanting a place to write, rehearse, recharge, relax, and be creative. We met as strangers and parted as friends: instrumentalists, singers, sound artists, storytellers and dancers, sharing a week of creativity in the lea of the Quantock Hills.

Halsway Manor is a beautiful historic house, registered in 1966 to promote participation in the folk arts through a wide range of residential courses and events. The Open House week enables artists to have a breathing space to develop material and skills away from the usual distractions of home life and to inspire each other. I found it a nourishing and inspiring experience to be surrounded by so many creative people, and also to share some of the difficulties of the past few years.

I attended with fellow musician, melodeonist Anna Pack, to work on new repertoire for balfolk dancing. Each day we had a 'Sharing Session' where we could discuss and present any material we wanted feedback on, in a very relaxed informal manner. This felt very helpful and constructive. In the evenings, people tended to congregate in the bar to sing, share tunes, tell stories and dance. Looking around at the beautiful wood-panelled setting, it felt as though people through the decades and centuries had been doing the same long ago, and hopefully will continue to do the same for many years to come.

I am one of the organisers of Sheffield Eurosession, and our intention is to continue to bring new repertoire to continue to share and encourage the musicians and dancers that attend our sessions and events. Many thanks to SIFD for their financial support towards my attendance at the Open House and for their contribution to Sheffield Eurosession.

Jo Veal

Scenic Holland & Oriental Turkey

Unfortunately we are cancelling our tours in September 2023 due to the devastating earthquake that has hit this country. It exactly covers the region we planned to travel and has affected thousands of people. The after effect of this disaster will have a long term impact.

We also feel that it would be inappropriate to celebrate or dance with people who have undoubtedly been confronted with deaths and casualties in their family only months before our visit.

Although we had enough registrations, we felt obliged to take this decision. Because some participants choose to book both the tour to Turkey and preceding tour to The Netherlands, this also touches the Dutch Tour.

We simply don't have enough registrations left to make the Holland Tour happen.

Tineke van Geel



cover costumes



*Jordanian kaftan (front cover) and Greek costume (back cover) **Ed.***

Ekeby Polska

Sweden

7 G D7 3

12 G

17 D7 3 3 G

23 C F 3 G7

28 3 C 3

F 3 G7 C

"Wilf Horrocks' Collection"

The dance "**Ekeby Polska**" was composed in 1922 by Filip Rylander, the leader of the Boxholm folk dance club, for a festival in Boxholm, Östergötland in Sweden.

Source "Svenska Folkdanser" published 1964 by Svenska Ungdomsringen for Bydgekultur .

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAnKEUccp9A>

Jeanette Hull



A dance from Northern Italy will feature next month - **La Jutza** - does anyone remember it? **Ed.**



SIFD Committee

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WHAT'S ON IN MARCH

- S.I **Saturday 11th BALKANPLUS** see page 3
- Saturday 11th CATHY COMES TO CALVER** dance with Cathy Meunier at Calver Village Hall, Calver, Derbyshire S32 3XR £10. 1030-1630. details Janet 01629 57065 or Gill 01246 410020. Bring your own lunch, but drinks supplied.
- S.I **Saturday 25th DORRIDGE DAY OF DANCE** see page 5
- S.I **Sunday 26th A DAY WORKSHOP WITH DALILA** at Witnesham Village Hall near Ipswich. 11am-5pm. Bring your own lunch, drinks will be provided. More details from Sally Fletcher fletcherism@aol.com or phone 01473 252824.



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