

Society for International Folk Dancing

# SIFD News



January 2025

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

“Bez chodského dudáka by nebyla pravá muzika, svatba, posvícení ani masopust”. In Chodsko, no celebration, wedding, carnival or country fair can take place without a genuine bagpiper.

Thanks to Dal Sudwell for translating the title to the cover photo; he has written an accompanying article about Chod pipers (p.10).

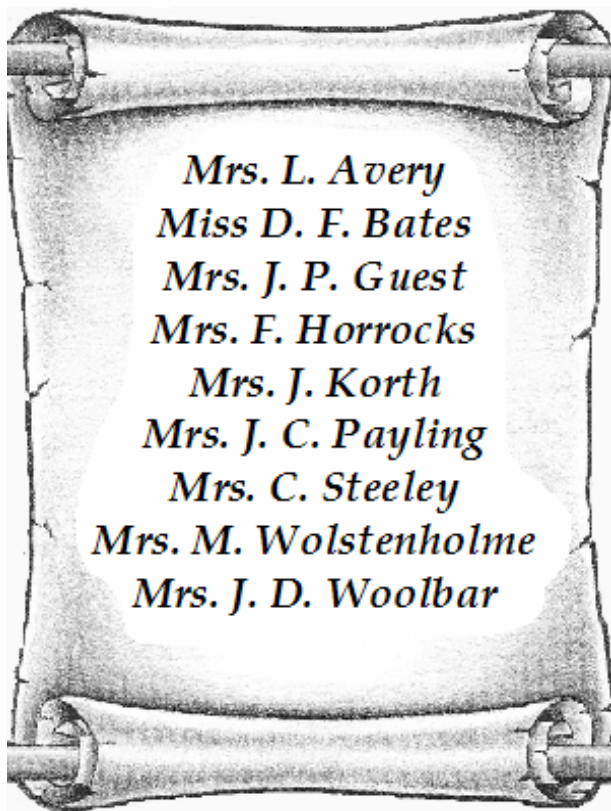
Costumes from Hionades, Evros are shown on the backpage; to accompany the article by Chrisandra Harris (p.6).

Next month the music for **Kohanochka**, from Russia, will feature; Hennie Konings taught us **Notchka**, could it be the same dance?

The **2025 List of Honorary Members** is below.

Ed.

## *Happy New Year*



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- S.I **Feb. 23: SIFD SUNDAY AFTERNOON DANCE** see page 5  
**Feb. 15: YGRA – BALKAN CEILIDH** see page 13
- S.I **Feb. 23: SLIGHTLY FOREIGN DANCES FROM ABROAD**  
at Pulborough Village Hall, RH20 2BP. £10 Times : 10:30am  
- 3:30pm details: Janet Douglas 01243 265010. Bring a picnic  
lunch. DIY Tea and Coffee available all day
- Mar. 1: NUTBROOK DAY COURSE** at Bramcote Memorial  
Hall, Nottingham, NG9 3HD. Enjoy and learn dances from  
many countries – led by Maggie Kaye. Everyone welcome, no  
partners needed. Cost for the day is £10.00. For further  
information please contact Gill Morral on telephone 0115  
9171831 or [gill.morral@ntlworld.com](mailto:gill.morral@ntlworld.com)
- S.I **Mar. 8: DANCE DAY WITH CATHY MEUNIER** at  
Witnesham Village Hall near Ipswich. Contact Sally Fletcher  
[fletcherism@aol.com](mailto:fletcherism@aol.com) or 01473 252824.
- S.I **Mar. 15: BALKANPLUS** in Trefusis, Cecil Sharp House, 2  
Regents Park Road, Camden, NW1 7AY starting at 6.00pm -  
9.00pm. £10 (cash only please) Evening dance with varied  
dance leaders. Any enquiries: [maureen.felton@btinternet.com](mailto:maureen.felton@btinternet.com)  
or our website [www.balkanplus.org.uk](http://www.balkanplus.org.uk)
- S.I **Apr. 6: SIFD SUNDAY AFTERNOON DANCE** see page 5  
**Apr. 12: YGRA – BALKAN CEILIDH** see page 13
- S.I **Apr. 26: BALKANPLUS** have invited **MITKO PETROV** for a  
day's workshop of Bulgarian dances and beyond in Trefusis,  
Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, Camden, NW1 7AY  
starting at 11.00am - 5.00pm.
- Admission prices to be finalised. Any enquiries to  
[maureen.felton@btinternet.com](mailto:maureen.felton@btinternet.com)

- S.I **May 2-5: MAY HEYDAYS** at the De Montfort School, Four Pools Rd, Evesham, WR11 1DQ. Mitko (Bulgarian/Balkan), Scandi plus French/Breton w/shops, 3 international/Balkan dances with live music, Argentine Tango & African music & dancing events, plus 2 Eurobals with bands. Early bird tickets until 31 January '25. [www.mayheydays.org.uk](http://www.mayheydays.org.uk) £97 per person,  
**May 10: YGRA – BALKAN CEILIDH** see page 13
- S.I **June 29: SIFD SUNDAY AFTERNOON DANCE** see below  
**July 12: YGRA – BALKAN CEILIDH** see page 13
- S.I **July 25-28: SIFD HALSWAY MANOR WEEKEND** of dancing & walking. Programme & booking form: Phil and Brenda Steventon: [brenda.steventon@btinternet.com](mailto:brenda.steventon@btinternet.com) Home: 020-8397-9649



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



## **Sunday Afternoon Dances 2025**

The Committee are happy to announce that we have booked Trefusis at Cecil Sharp House for the following dates:  
 Sunday 23rd February  
 Sunday 6th April  
 Sunday 29th June

The hall is booked 2 - 6pm so we will dance 2.30 - 5.30pm  
 The MC for the February dance is Anne Leach with the SIFD Band providing the music. £10 (cash only please)

Do put the dates in your diary and hope to see you there!

**Brenda Steventon**

## **A Dancing journey to Evros in Greece**

In July 2024 I was fortunate enough (with help from SIFD) to be able to join a large international group of dancers led by Kyriakos Moisidis on a dancing holiday to Evros in Greece.

Evros is in the north east of Greece at a point where the borders of Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey meet. The borders between countries have moved over time and as such this region has a rich dancing and traditional music history with influences from all three countries.

Much of the tradition is kept alive by women and especially older women who pass on the songs, music, dances and costumes. Home cooking is also thriving and we were often welcomed by huge spreads of food when we visited the village halls.

Many villages have a history of dances that are accompanied by singing only and especially singing by women. More modern versions of the dances at festivals are accompanied by instruments, especially bagpipes, but it was rewarding to experience both the old and more modern traditions.

Dance and traditional music is certainly thriving in this area and during our visit we were welcomed in to ten very different villages, each with their own distinct customs and music and dance. This is partly a result of the original ethnicity of each village. For example, in Kyprinos most of the villagers were originally from Ostaki now in Bulgaria. In Neo Himonio the inhabitants were ethnically Avantis and had moved to the area during the Ottoman rule from present day Albania. In Nea Vyssa the inhabitants had moved from Istanbul and Alexandroupoli. Many people had been displaced as a result of the exchange of population in 1923, some having moved several times with their neighbours as borders changed and the finality of their situation became obvious.

Today some of the villages, especially those in the more remote areas like Ormeio are clearly struggling. There is very little work for young people who often move to Germany seeking employment. However, to some extent this is now being balanced out as older people return from overseas after retirement, and a small number of artists and artisans have also moved to the area.

At large gatherings the music is being increasingly electrified and the focus being on the most popular dances amongst younger people. The more remote villages tend to retain the traditional instruments and a wider range of dances.

Popular dances in the area include Gikna, with each village having its own variation. This is a wedding dance from the Saturday before the wedding with the first person in line holding a bowl with three candles and money being collected for the bridal couple. Free hold partner Karsilama type dances are also common with each village having its own variation. Dances that tell stories of the history of events in the village are common, like Triantafyllia from Neo Hemonio. Lively versions of Zonaradiko are very popular especially among the younger people as are different versions of Baiduska.

There are some highly individual dances too like Susme from Oinoe where a single dancer dances in a large metal pan. This is also a wedding dance that takes place whilst the bride and groom are dressing and is thought to have originally come from Asia Minor.

It was very rewarding to be invited to dance in costume at the dance festival in Didymoticho/Koufovouno where the gathering of 100 gaidas (bagpipes) was also taking place. We were loaned beautiful costumes from the extensive collection in the village. It was amazing to dance in such a huge circle of dancers of all ages and to witness the cultural pride in local dance and music.

*continued overleaf >*

We were able to also witness many fascinating folk customs such as the parading of a (reconstructed) camel with associated dances and feasting in Gagavouzides. In Kyprinos we saw the ancient festival associated with drought where a young girl dressed in leaves visits houses to ask for water followed by dances to promote rain. (*below*)



It was a very rewarding dancing holiday and we learnt a huge amount about the area as well as 59 dances. Kyriacos is an excellent organiser and to successfully arrange such a complex and diverse program with 10 different local dance teachers, 10 evening village festivals, live music at classes and in the evenings and a wide range of cultural experiences was a huge feat.

I have already shared some of the dances I learnt at the Nutbrook group and at other events in Nottingham and Oxford and am happy to offer them to any other groups who may be interested.

**Chrisandra Harris**





## **The Amount held in SIFD Reserves**

I am writing this as over the years I have been concerned about the ever-increasing amount held by the SIFD. When I have mentioned this to people I got the impression that very few people read the accounts - and when I tell them of the amount they are greatly surprised.

I was concerned enough when the amount held was around 100,000 pounds - but it is now around 200,000 pounds. I have been told that this has been boosted by bequests...

I think I will not be the only one to consider that this is completely inappropriate given the scale of SIFD's activities; and of course it will have lost value over the years since it is unlikely that investment return will have matched inflation.

So what to do?

Existing groups - do consider asking for subsidy/underwriting for any projects.

But also reach out to any dance groups that you know of - that are not in the SIFD - especially those groups whose members are from the country where the dances are from eg. Bulgarians - they mostly 'do their own thing' and don't see any advantage in joining - emphasise the possibility of grants.

And would there be the possibility of making grants to people of limited means towards attending dance courses?

Whatever, there needs to be some significant - albeit well managed - expenditure.

**Toni Gutman**



## Bagpipers of Chodsko

Chodsko is a folkloristic region in south-west Bohemia (western part of the Czech Republic) with its own history, dialect (of the Czech language), folk costumes and customs. The inhabitants of the area were given many significant privileges by the Czech king John in 1325 as guardians of the borderlands with Bavaria. They became free farmers, allowed to carry arms and move freely through the wooded area, and they were subject directly to the king. When there was an attempt by a local German-speaking aristocrat to withdraw these privileges, there was an uprising in 1695. It was not successful and many privileges were taken away from Chods. The resistance of Chods served throughout the centuries as an example of the Czechs' determined efforts against germanisation.

Chodsko has remained to this day one of the most preserved folkloristic regions with colourful costumes and distinct musical traditions. While in other Czech regions the prevailing instrument is usually fiddle, and in Moravia cimbalom (dulcimer), in Chodsko it is bagpipes (called dudy in Czech). The bag is often made of goat skin and the usual type is bellows-blown, with a drone hanging over the shoulder, and often featuring a goat's head (similar to the Polish classical bock). Though I've been told that there are still a few musicians around who play the mouth-blown dudy with the drone pipe hanging in front of the piper.

In the past, I have danced several dances from southern Bohemia and particularly Chodsko under the instruction of Radek Rejšek (who was born in the region) on the Dvorana courses. If I remember correctly, all dances were couple dances, though some of them started on a circle or in a chain. Dancing to a known tune, the dancers stopped dancing at intervals and facing the music sang the words of the song, then carried on dancing as before, or grabbing the partner and waltzing/polkaing around the room.

A prototype of a bagpiper from Chodsko is Švanda, or Schwanda. He was even immortalised by a Czech composer Jaromir Weinberger in his opera Schwanda the Bagpiper (Švanda dudák in Czech). It had the premiere in the Prague National Theatre in 1927 and was performed, among other places, at Covent Garden in May 1934. Though the whole work is nowadays rarely produced, the Polka and the Fugue from the second act are still in the repertoire of many orchestras.

By the way, to pronounce Chodsko should be quite easy for the Scots, as CH is in Czech pronounced roughly like the CH in Scottish loch. So the name is pronounced chodskoh, or Chodenland in German.

**Dal Sudwell**



### **SIFD Reserves**

Toni's article (*page 9*) resonates with me.

At the 2023 AGM I did ask if we could consider buying our own premises, which would also be a sound investment. I suggested that one of the many run down town centres in the country could give us the opportunity to have our own address (for the first time). We could take on an empty shop, use it for local dance groups, costume storage, archive storage, etc. Also, being a charity, business rates would be lower.

Our membership numbers are falling, and eventually, if we don't act, another charity (probably EFDSS) will swallow up our reserves.

**Janet Douglas**



Another extract from the "Dictionary of the Dance" by W. G. Raffe. (Dated 1879 - so who knows whether or not it survived the Revolution.)

## Dance Alphabet

### Yunnan (China)

Lolo people in Yunnan perform a rice-sowing dance. Each evening, after filling their day with planting, women assemble in groups; and proceed to dance in a meadow with youths of the village, to music of guitar and castanets. Their dances are varied and peculiar, suggesting something of Indian styles, in circle dances. After a dance period is ended, a damsel will offer a glass of rice liquor to the guest she most approves; after he takes a sip, she also drinks. Each couple follows, until all have had refreshment. Songs merge with renewed dancing in these Spring evenings.

*La Province Chinoise de Yun-nan.* E. Rocher. Paris, 1879.

The Dictionary: Y-Z

\*



Chinese dance at the 2022 Dance Around the World

## Barnet IFDC

After trialling a new timing for our dance sessions, we have decided to change again to an 'in between' time.

So from January we will meet from 7.30 to 10pm.

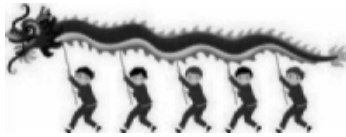
The first session will be January 10th. Everyone welcome!

Church House, Wood Street, Barnet EN5 4BW

(NB - you need to ring the bell as the entry door has to be kept locked!)

Happy New Year!

**Meryl Abraham**



## Ygra – Balkan Ceilidh

11th January: Discover the joy of Balkan-style folk dancing with Ygra – Balkan Ceilidh! (see Diary Dates for more)

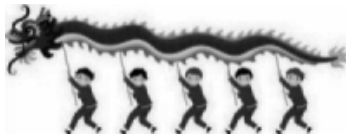
19:00 – 19:45 Practice the essential steps

20:00 – 22:00 Put your freshly gained skills to practice with live music from across the Balkans played by Ygra at Balkanplus.

Trefusis Room, Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, London, NW1 7AY

£15 on the door / £10 advance tickets or unwaged

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/ygra>



When researching **Bavno Oro** it turned out as I expected - I have danced it - just following on as you do. It translates as 'slow dance', and unsurprisingly it is slow.

I believe it was first performed by Danny Lumley's Bulgarian group in the 1950s.

**Ed.**

# Bavno Oro

Macedonian

**A** *Slow*

Am E7 Dm E

13 18 23 28 30

**B**

**C**

E Am E Dm E Am Dm

**D**

A E A E A

35 39 44 49 53

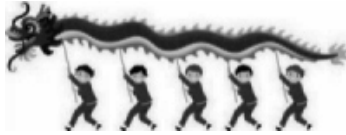
**E**

B Am B

1. 2. **Faster**

Repeat A and B

"Wilf Horrocks' Collection"



## SIFD Committee

- Acting Chairman:** Richard Mellish 15 Lancaster Road, Harrow, HA2 7NN  
*Richard@Mellish.uk 0208 863 7807*
- Treasurer:** Judith Payling Rosebank, 56 Quickley Lane,  
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*judithcpayling@yahoo.co.uk*
- Secretary:** Dalila Heath 102 High Street, Landbeach, Cambs  
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8NU *j2ohn@yahoo.com*



C.I.O. number **1189141**



## WHAT'S ON IN JANUARY

**Sunday 5th NEW YEAR PARTY** 11.00 -16.30 in Calver Village Hall, Derbyshire S32 3XR. Bring & share lunch. [gregboyd99@aol.com](mailto:gregboyd99@aol.com)

**Saturday 11th YGRA – BALKAN CEILIDH** see page 13

**Saturday 18th STRICTLY BALKAN PARTY** in The Cotswold Hall, Northleach, Gloucs. GL54 3HG. 2.30-5.30pm. Costumes welcome. £3 children free, food & drink provided. Details: Stephie: 07765 352588

\*



**Chinese New Year = 29th January**