

Rhif 1 No. 1.

CYLCH-LYTHYR

CYMDEITHAS DDAWNS WERIN CYMRU

NEWS LETTER

Swyddogion y Gymdeithas ---- Officers of the Society

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GAIR GAN Y GOLYGYDD

Wele Cylch-lythyr cyntaf i gael ei gyhoeddi gan Gymdeithas Ddawns Werin Cymru. Ychydig dudalenau, ond y mae'n garregfilltir amlwg yn hanes y gymdeithas. O'r pryd y sefydlwyd hi rhyw bedair blynedd yn ol y mac wedi llwyddo yn rhyfeddol. Erbyn heddiw y mae nifer fawr o grwpiau dawnsio a chymdeithasau lleol dan nawdd y gymdeithas wedi eu sefydlu led-led Cymru. Yn ychwanegol at frwdfrydedd swyddogion ac aelodau caiff ysbrydiaeth o ddau gyfeiriad arall, sef Eisteddfod Ryngenedlaethol Llangollen a'r gwaith golygyddol a wna Lois Blake ar y dawnsiau traddodiadol. Heddiw gwelir y rhain ar lwyfan Eisteddfod yr Urdd a daeth Ysgol Wanwyn y Gymdeithas yn sefydliad blynyddol ym Mhantfyfedwen. Yn araf ond yn sicr y mae'r ddawns yn adennill ei lle priodol ym mywyd y werin. Croeso i'r Cylch-lythyr cyntaf. Gobeithiwn nad yw ond rhagredegydd bychan i gyhoeddiadau mwy yn y dyfodol.

IFAN O. WILLIAMS.

EDITORIAL

Here is the first News-letter to be published by the Welsh Folk Dance Society. Only a few pages, yet it is a definite landmark in the history of the Society. From the time it was founded about four years ago, it has been surprisingly successful. By to-day, a large number of dance groups and local societies have been established throughout Wales under its aegis. In addition to the enthusiasm of officials and members it draws inspiration from two other sources, namely, the Llangollen International Eisteddfod and the editorial work on the traditional dances done by Lois Blake. Nowadays these are seen on the stage of the Urdd Eisteddfod and the Society's Spring School has become an annual event at Pantfyfedwen. Slowly, but surely the dance is reclaiming its rightful place in the life of the people. We welcome the first News-letter. We hope that it is only a small precursor to larger publications in the future.

IFAN O. WILLIAMS.

TRADITIONAL DANCE

For the first *News-letter* of the Welsh Folk Dance Society I have been as Chairman to write briefly on what is generally meant by the terms "folk music" and "folk dance."

But before doing so, I should like to congratulate everyone concerned on the present strength and vitality of the Welsh Folk Dance Society. We have only been working together four years, but the change that has taken place in Wales during that time in the general attitude towards folk dance is almost incredible.

The first point that should be made clear with regard to "folk music," which is often understood to include "folk dance," is that it is never, among highly civilized peoples, the consciously *composed* music or dance of any one person. It is true that certain pieces of music or certain dances may have been composed by some unknown person or other saturated in a national tradition; but true folk music has long lost its individual source, and in its submission to the process of subconscious national transmission, has been moulded completely to subject the form to national acceptance. Folk music is also in its *pure form* not "arranged" with strange accompaniments or for novel combinations; but truly sympathetic folk song "arrangements" and folk dance stagings are usually accepted by most -, is legitimate present-day developments.

It has been pointed out by a number of folk authorities that to all regional groups or nations there belongs "a basic human strata"; and, whether one be cultured or uncouth, rich or poor, the national folk expression is the natural expression of that group-character. It is therefore agreed by most authorities that true folk music "is the product of evolution and is dependent on the circumstances of continuity, variation and selection." - (*Journal of the International Folk Music Council, Vol. V, p.12*). This, by the way, was the only definition that could be agreed upon after much discussion, at the fifth Annual Conference of the International Council, July, 1952.

The second point that should be made clear is that so-called "popular" music or dance is not of necessity folk music or folk dance at all. Quite an amount of present-day "popular" music, owing to the influence of the gramophone, the radio and television, has never been born of the people. and is only an imposition of a few foisted on the many by artificial means. Such music and dance is often dead almost before it is heard. Age must also not be considered an infallible criterion of authenticity. Something may have come down to us in some form or another that was never the living expression of a people as a whole. But if a song or dance has lived *freely* among a regional group or nation for some *generations* then that surely is the "folk music" and "folk dance" of that group or nation.

We should carefully study our own "folk music" and "folk dance" as they are the fundamental expressions of our national joys and sorrows, and they alone can maintain our national character. Let us see that in keeping them alive as a natural expression of the people we give them free life and never force them into strange channels to satisfy our personal pride. W. S. GWYNN
WILLIAMS

PANTYFEDWEN

Our third and largest week-end school is something we shall all remember ; but it may, perhaps, be helpful, both to those who were present and those who were unable to come, if we review in detail the actual work accomplished.

For the benefit of those who depend on Gramophone records, we made sure that all were thoroughly familiar with The Bishop of Bangor's Jig and Lord of Carnarvon's Jig; Evans' Jig and Oswestry Wake ; now available on H.M.V. B 10445 and B 10446. To most, this was revision ; but Ap Slienkin, H.M.V. B 10113, was new to many. This splendid tune, composed by John Parry, Bardd Alaw, was recorded for a dance called the Tempest, discovered in Vermont, U.S.A. ; and shows the immense popularity of our Welsh tunes.

St. David's Day, Of Noble race was Shenkin (Y Gadlys), The Three Sheepskins (Croen y ddafad felan) and Meillionen, all simple dances to learn, though not so easy to dance well, were taken very carefully. All need careful timing and spacing and Meillionen, in particular, requires poise and perfection of the siding movement.

We then tackled the problems of the triple minor set. As I have pointed out elsewhere, it is considered legitimate to alter the formation of these dances, into one more in keeping with folk tradition and more satisfying to the needs of the dancers to-day. In order to clarify the whole subject, we took some of these in their three possible forms ; the long triple minor set of the early 18th century, according to the notation in the collections " The Welch Whim " and the "Welsh Morris Dance " ; as a single set dance for three couples and, in the case of Rhif Wyth and Welch Whim, as a duple minor set. Miss Griffin has provided complete instructions for the Rhif Wyth in this form (published by Stainer & Bell).

Our conclusions were that the Welch Whim should be taken as a duple minor set, by eliminating the 3rd couples.

PANT'Y FEDWEN-continued.

A 2 1st M sets to 2nd W and 1st W to 2nd M.

B 1 7-8 1st couple turn single, in 2nd place.

Evans' Delight was found quite delightful as a single set for six.

A1 1st couple cast off below the 2nd and dance the figure 8: the man through the 3rd and the woman through the second, both starting with the left-hand loop.

B 2 1st couple is now at the bottom of the set, so all take hands and circle once round.

The Welsh Morris Dance needs no alteration to become a single set, and this was undoubtedly its original form. This is a beautiful dance, but it requires a sympathetic accompanist. It was due to the untiring patience and skill of our most excellent musicians, that we were able to smooth over the difficulties of this and other dances.

Nine comparatively simple dances , four triple minor sets: three Llangadfan Round Os and Community dancing for relaxation, would seem sufficient for a short week-end. But we did not neglect the Welsh Reel, danced by all, with enjoyment, if not perfection, and one group made a good start on the Roaring Hornpipe. Another group worked hard on the exquisite Abergenny: a startling revelation, with its curious resemblance to the newly discovered Ddawns Blodau. Can this be mere coincidence or is it possible that this 17th century Court dance had its roots in South Wales, where its prototype lived on to be danced, within living memory, in the district of Groeswen and Nantgarw no great distance from Abergenny, or Abergavenny ?

LOIS BLAKE

NOTES AND QUERIES

"I am deeply interested in the culture of the Breton-Cornish-Welsh peoples. I would like to know what dance forms may be considered specifically Brythonic---The Country Dance seems **to have** originated in the West of Britain. Could this dance form be considered Celtic ? "

(IVAN M. WAY, Denver, Colorado).

We used to say that the Celts were at the bottom of it all but recent comparative research seems to point to a pre-celtic origin. While the processional Morris has survived in Lancashire, Derbyshire, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany, the Country Dance, which may have derived from it, has not only spread its influence, but has been subjected to many influences. One has only to watch an International festival to see how dangerous such a generalisation may be.

"Could you tell me the first elate at which the term "Reel" was applied to Welsh dance? Has it any exact meaning; and is it possible to give a definition of Reel in Welsh usage" ?

(H. A. THURSTON, Bristol University)

"The earliest date I can trace at the moment is 1828 ; but the Welsh were reeling and weaving long before that. Perhaps some Celtic scholar can trace the origin of the word.

"A dance known as early as the 12th century was done on the coiled horns of a ram : the feet inserted down the centre, padded with wool. As the horn has a tapered spiral, this gives either a sideways rocking motion or a front to back tilt ; or with the foot on point, it is possible to spin on the tip of the polished horn."

(D. HARTLEY, Fron, Wrexham).

We have heard of Welsh shepherds spinning on one horn, but we have not risked our bones in a front to back tilt!

NOTES AND QUERIES--continued.

"A young college student has asked me for information about Welsh traditional dances. It seems she has to write an essay on them. Could you put together a few notes ?"

(W. A. WILLIAMS, Llwyngwriil).

We could, and write an ssay, but we think the College authorities ought to award us the Diploma !

"Can you recommend one or two dances which are non-progressive ? I don't like progressive dances, especially Triple minor sets, for display at a Gwyl Werin. The repetition can be more tedious than entertaining for the audience ?"

(ENID WILLIAMS, Girard, Ohio).

The Triple minor set was devised in. the 18th century to suit the taste of the ballroom of the period. They were based on the older form of dance for three couples and it is therefore permissible to let them revert to type. They may be taken as a whole set for three couples, or, in some cases, as in Miss Griffin's arrangement of the Rhif Wyth, the third, inactive couple may be eliminated, so that the dance becomes a duple minor set.

"The teachers in my family tell me that Welsh people were not taken to dancing. We love to sing and since our ancestors were more or less religious, dancing was not a part of their life.

(EDITH M. WILLIAMS, Girard, Ohio).

There'll be dancing in our Mountains, when you come back to Wales !

"An old lady told me that they used to dance Y Ddafad Gorniog in their farm kitchen (Bala district). She thought the dance ended in a kind of prance, with the males making a rush to butt their female partners with their beads and the females trying to escape the male clutches."

(A.G. BOWEN JONES, Ruthin).

Men please note !

LOIS BLAKE

Y WISG GYMREIG

Fe gynnwys y wisg Gymreig, yn ol y gred gyffredin amdani, het uchel, pais, betgwn, ffedog a siol, y cwbl o wneuthuriad lleol. Math o got laes oedd y betgwn yn flurfio gwasg ae yn cau tros y bronau, a chynffon hir a ddeuai tros y bais y tu ol, a'r ffedog yn cuddio ffrynt y bais.

Rhaid deall nad oedd dim arbennig Gymreig yn y wisg hon. Yr oedd yr un mor adnabyddus trwy Loegr. Dywed Scott am wragedd Northumberland yn nechrau'r 19eg ganrif: "The women had no other dress than a bedgown and a petticoat." Yn y flwyddyn 1834, sgrifennodd Gwenynen Gwent (yr Arglwyddes Llanofar ar ol hynny) draethawd ar "Yr laith Gymraeg, a Dull-wisgoedd Cymru," lle y pleidiai tros wisg genedlaethol o wlanen neu frethyn, fel cynnyrch naturiol Cymru, yn hytrach na'r "defnyddiau anghysurus" tramor ! Hyn a achosodd barhad y bais a'r betgwn mewn llawer ardal fel gwisg "draddodiadol" ! Nid oes i'r wisg draddodiad cenedlaethol o gwbl ; mae hynny'n eglur hefyd gan nad oes wisg "genedlaethol" i wyr.

Eithr gan fod y wisg bellach wedi ennill ei lle, ni thal ei hanwybyddu ac ar gyfer dawnsio gwerin hawdd fyddai datblygu ar seiliau'r hen. Sut bynnag, mater i wneuthurwyr gwisg ysgafn gwisgoedd yw hyn yn hytrach na phroblein i wr fel myf !

DR. IORWERTH C. PEATE.

YR URDD A'R DDAWNS WERIN

Rhyw bedair blynedd yn ol y daeth yr Urdd gyntaf i gysylltiad a Mrs. Lois Blake a hynny mewn Cwrs Nadolig yni Mhantymfedwen. Y pryd hwnnw, Dawns Llanofwr oedd yr unig ddawns Gymreig a wyddai'r mwyafrif ohonom er bod gennym frith gof am y dawnsiau plant a ddysgid ar gyfer y Mabolgampau gynt. Merched yn unig, wrth gwrs, a geid i ddawnsio Dawns Llanofwr pan fyddai galw amdani ; byddai'n anfri ar fachgen i ofyn iddo wneud peth mor ferchetaidd !

Ond dyma roi Dawnsio Gwerin ar raglen y Cwrs Nadolig a gwahodd Mrs. Lois Blake yno i'w cyflwyno. Tueddi i godi'u trwynau yr oedd y dynion ond fe gytunodd y rhai mwyf dewr i ymuno "jest o ran hywl" ac o barch i Mrs. Blake. O edrych yn ol yn awr, y mae'n rhaidein bod yn ymddangos i Mrs. Blake yn bur ainobeithiol, yr wythnos honno - yn cymryd yn hir i ddysgu dawns ac yn glogyrnaidd i'r eitha. Ond yr oedd y syniad wedi dechrau cydio a hyd yn oed y bechgyn yn cydnabod fod rhywbeth ynddo wedi'r cwbl. Proffwydem ninnau yr ai'r syniad o nerthi i nerth, a rhoi pum mlynedd iddo wreiddio yn nychymyg ieuenctid Cymru. Yr oedd llawer o bethu yn ein herbyn: nid oedd traddodiad dawnsio gwerin yng Nghymru ers dau can mlynedd a pheth i ferched yn unig oedd y dawnsiau a ddysgid yn yr ysgolion.

Yna, fe ddaeth y Gwersyll Celtaidd ym Mhantymfedwen yng ngwyliau'r Pasg a Mrs. Blake gyda ni unwaith eto. Yno hefyd yr oedd tyrfa dda o Wyddelod ieuinc ac wrth weld y bechgyn hynny yn dawnsio am oriau gyda brwdfrydedd a gosgeiddrwydd, fe laddwyd - am byth gobeithio - y gred ei fod yn beth merchetaidd i wneud dawnsio gwerin.

O hynny ymlaen, fe awd ati o ddifri. Cafwyd cyrsiau undydd mewn Dawnsio Gwerin, a phrin y cynhaliwyd unrhyw gwrs preswyl lle nad oedd Dawnsio Gwerin yn cael ei le. Erbyn hyn,

YR URDD A'R DDAWNS WERIN - parhad.

fe geir dosbarthiadau cyson mewn nifer mawr o Aelwydydd ac Adrannau ac yn eu plith y mae Aberdaron, Aberpennar, Abersoch, Aberystwyth, Bethesda, Caerau, Caernarfon, Criccieth, Cross Inn, Cwmafan, Dyserth, Felinfoel, Foel Lixswm, Llanbedr, Llanberis, Llanbryn-mair, Llanelwy, Llanfair Caereinion, Llanfyllin, Machynlleth, Treherbert ac Ystalfera; gyda dosbarthiadau Adran yn unig yn Abertridwr, Merthut, Pontrhydyfen, Porthmadog a'r Wyddgrug. Mae Adrannau ysgolion hefyd mewn ambell fan wedi gafael yn dynn yn y ddawns a gellid nodi yn arbennig Ysgol Fodern Bangor, Ysgol Fodern Blaendulais, Ysgol Fodern Cymmer (Port Talbot), Ysgol Fodern Fflint, Ysgol Ramadeg y Garw, Ysgol Ramadeg Pontardawe ac Ysgol Gymraeg Ynyswen.

Trefnwyd Gwyliau Dawnsio Gwerin gan Gylchoedd a Siroedd a rhoddwyd cystadleuthau Dawnsio Gwerin ar lwyfan Eisteddfod Genedlaethol yr Urdd, ac yn 1952, rhoddwyd darlun mawr o Siroedd Cymru o waith Mrs Blake fel gwobr yng nghystadleueth Dawnsio Gwerin yr Aelwydydd. Daeth y Ddawns Werin yn ei grym hefyd i'r Mabolgampau yng Nghaerdydd. Ond hwyrach mae'n ddiweddaraf o'r gwyliau hyn oedd Rali Aelwydydd Gogledd Cymru yn Llangollen ddydd Sadwrn Tachwedd 15fed, pan oedd dros gant o ieuenctid yn ymuno'n frwd yn y dawnsio am brynhawn cyfan dan gyfarwyddyd Miss Alice Williams, Trefnydd yr Urdd yn Arfon.

Y cam nesaf fydd datblygu cerddorfa fechan, ac y mae mawr angen offerynwyr o blith yr aelodau eu hunain. Hyfryd fyddai gweld tri neu bedwar o offerynwyr ym mhob Aelwyd lle ceir dosbarth Dawnsio Gwerin. Byddai'n gymaint o gyffaeliad i Dwmpath Dawnsio yn yr awyr agored. Tybed na ellid rhoi'r pum mlynedd nesaf i hybu gwaith yr offerynwyr? Byddai'n gyfraniad gwerthfawr i fywyd yr Aelwyd ac i fywyd Cymru gyfan. Beth amdani, Aelwydydd ?

GWENNANT DAVIES.

WELSH DANCES AT THE LINGAID

It seems a very long time ago since fourteen of us embarked for Sweden to represent Wales at the Lingaid. Though so far distant certain things still stand out in my memory.

The anxiety that accompanied us the whole way was our luggage as it included a colossal wooden box containing one harp and a large skip containing our costumes including Welsh hats. Every custom official was convinced they contained contraband and would not rest till they had observed these innocent contents.

Although we have been frequently informed by all and sundry that it is not correct to dance in a Welsh hat, it was this part of our costume which caused delighted interest wherever we danced. Many foreigners has never seen a complete Welsh costume before and it proved a far greater novelty than the more familiar Scottish kilt. We were assured that during the March Past no less a personage than the Crown Prince himself enquired who we were.

A group of British Dances was given by us together with England, Ireland and Scotland. Our contribution consisted of The Llanover Reel. which the harp accompaniment rendered very effective. Very large and very beautiful halls were used for our demonstrations, one having a green rubber floor. The custodians of this hall looked askance at the heels of our buckled shoes. After much argument we were graciously allowed to dance, on condition we did not stamp. As a triple stamp occurs continually throughout the Llanover Reel this was a little difficult.

I have no space to tell you of the lovely reception given to the leaders of the teams, which we attended complete with flag in the beautiful town Hall. Nor yet can I dwell upon the amount of rain that fell upon us during the Festival.

All of us have very happy memories of the fortnight spent in Stockholm and the great kindness of the Swedish people.

D. FREEMAN.

PARTICULARS OF AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

1. Brynmawr Welsh Dancers.

Secretary : A. Wallbank, Llarach, Llanelly Hill, Abergavenny.
Club Nights : Wednesday and Fridays, 7.30 p.m.
Place : Infants' School, Brynfilawr.
Teacher : Bernard Hayes.

2. Bylchau, Denbigh.

Secretary : Miss Dora Roberts, Cwmrhinwedd, Bylchau.
Club Nights : Thursdays. [Denbigh.
Place: Village Hall, Bylchau.
Teacher : Miss Kate Dayies.

3. The Gower Society.

Secretary : Dr. Gwent Jones, 188, Gower Road, Swansea.

4. Llangollen and District Folk Dance Group.

President: Mr. W. S. Gwynn Williams, Plas Hafod.
Chairman :Mrs. Marjorie Pierce, Tegfryn, Birch Hill.
Secretary :Mr. J. C. Salter, Chirk.
Organising Secretary : Mr. Tom Owen.
Treasurer:Mrs. Gwynn Williams.
Membership: Open to men and women over 18 years of age.
Application in writing to Secretary.
Fee : 5/- per annum.
Meetings : Fridays at 7.30 p.m.
Place : The Junior School. Regent Street.
Teacher: Mrs. Blake, in her absence, Mr. Goodman.

It is hoped to have one class per month in the Town Hall for the sake of greater space, and to arrange occasional Open Evenings when members of other groups would be invited to join us.

PARTICULARS OF AFFILIATED SOCIETIES -continued.

5. Llansannan Folk Dance Group.

Secretary : Mr. Lloyd Williams, Hwylfordd, Llansannan.

Club Nights : Monday.

Place : Village Hall, Llansannan.

Teacher : Miss Kate Davies.

6. Manchester Folk Dance Centre. Director and Secretary :

Lt.-Col. H. R. Baldrey, 505, Wilbraham Road, Manchester

7. Nantglyn Folk Dance Group.

Secretary : Miss G. Williams, Broadleys Farm, Denbigh.

Club Nights : Wednesday.

Place : Memorial Hall, Denbigh.

Teacher : Miss Kate Davies.

8. The Slough and District Welsh Society.

Secretary: Jim Hammond 112 Elliman Avenue, Slough,

Bucks. Tel : Slough 24849

GAIR GAN Y TRYSORYDD

Cymdeithas Ddawns Werin Cymru yw un o'r cymdeithasau ieuengaf yng Nghymru, ac y mae eisoes wedi ennyn brwdfrydedd mawr yn y De a'r Gogledd. Ymaelododd cannoedd o bobl ifanc a chanol oed a hi mewn ychydig flynyddoedd.

Mae ei chyfraniad i Gymru yn wych, a'i phwyslais ar yr agwedd honno o'n diwylliant gwerin a anwybyddwyd gymaint gennym, sef adfer i fywyd y wlad yr hen ddawnsiau a'r chwaraeon iach a fwynheid gan ein hynafiaid gynt ar y twmpath chwarae.

Hyfryd yw gweld plant yr Urdd a'n pobol ifanc mor awyddus i ddysgu ac ymarfer y rhain ac yn gweu trwy'i gilydd yn ffigyrau prydf berth yr hen ganeuon gwerin a'r hen ddawnsiau traddodiadol. Y mae ein dyled, yn anad neb, i Mrs. Lois Blake, ein llywyddes, am roi ysbrydiaeth i fudiad mor werthfawr, ac am ei gweithgarweii diflino.

Fel trysorydd, gwahoddaf eraill i ymuno ac i roi pob cefnogaeth i fudiad sydd mor addawol. Gofynnaf yn garedig hefyd i aelodau'r Gymdeithas anfon eu cyfraniadau blynyddol yn gyson.

Tal aelodaeth yw 5/-, Aelodaeth am oes £5. Grwpiau, Gini,

I'w hanfon i'r Trysorydd.

W. EMRYS CLEAVER.

Glyn Myfyr, Denbigh Road,
Rhuthyn.

It is now four years since our Society was formed, and we can justly boast that each succeeding year has been more successful than the last. The membership has steadily increased and new enthusiasts from North and South Wales are still coming in.

The work of the Society is now well in hand under the leadership of our excellent President. Mrs. Lois Blake-the "soul" of our movement. We can be proud of the fact that the Society has got something really splendid to give to Wales, our native land, who has neglected for so long the natural and spontaneous side of her simple culture.

As the treasurer I invite others who have not as yet joined us to do so, and respectfully remind subscribers that enthusiasm, though essential, is not enough to ensure the well being of this movement in Wales. Please send your subscriptions regularly.

Individual subscriptions are 5/- a year, and £5 life Membership, while Groups may join for One Guinea, and should be sent directly to the Treasurer :

W. EMRYS CLEAVER.

Glyn Myfyr, Denbigh Road,
Ruthin, N.Wales.