

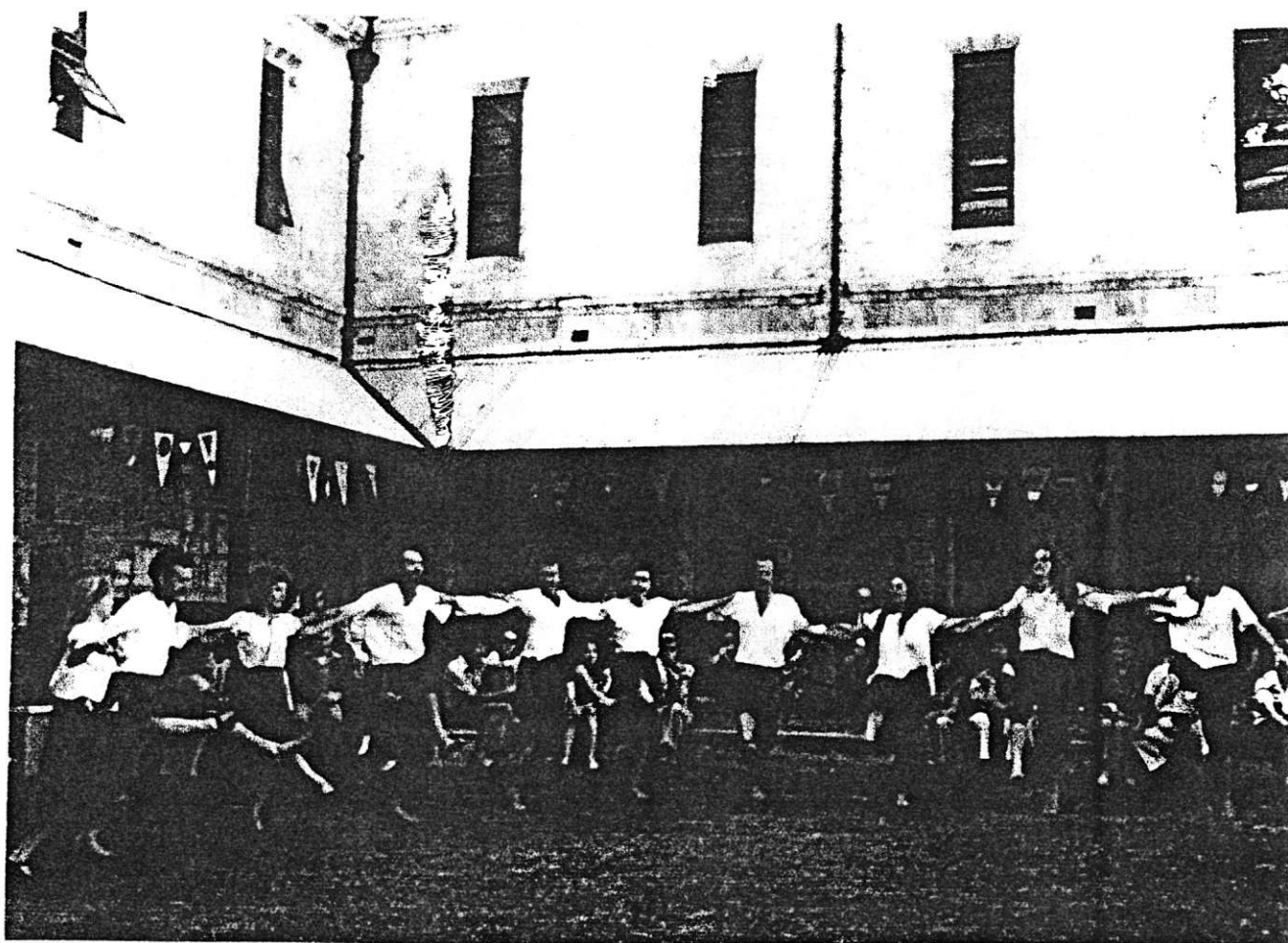
# GRAPEVINE



Volume 7 Number 3 May 2, 1996

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

Grapevine is the newsletter of the Perth International Folk Dance Group. The group meets Monday evenings at the Wembley Scout Hall in Jersey St, Jolimont, except public holidays. The evening begins at 7:00pm with an hour dance lesson, a further half hour revision, then general dancing till late. For more information, contact Joy (386-7438), Pam (277-4462) or John (444-4736).



**PERFORMANCE GROUP AT OPENING OF FREMANTLE ARTS CENTRE 1976**

L-R: Eve Blair, Doug Pianta, Brenda Harvey, Ken Pinches, Steph, Helen Tyrell, John Barker, Mary Drake, Tom, David Blair.

## EDITORIAL FOREWORD

PIFDG's twentieth anniversary has become the catalyst for a search into some history about folk dance in recent decades in Perth. Hereunder is what has been unearthed to date. No claim is made that the history here is definitive - nor even that it is entirely accurate. If anyone would like to add to it please contact Grapevine Editor Joy Hill (09) 386 7438. Thanks to all who have assisted to date.

## HISTORY! HISTORY!

## READ ALL ABOUT IT!

### COUNTING NOT STRONG POINT OF DANCE GROUP?

On the face of it, celebrating the twentieth birthday in 1996 of a group which had its origins in 1971 or 1972 may seem a trifle odd - if not downright bizarre. However, although there may have been some international dancing in Perth prior to 1976, it was not until Eve Blair began teaching international dancing twenty years ago that the Perth International Folk Dance Group became firmly established as a permanent group and received its name (from Eve). For more than ten years Eve was the sole teacher apart from the occasional visiting teacher. For these reasons Eve is acknowledged as the originator and architect of the Perth International Folk Dance Group.

Just after Eve's arrival in Perth with husband David they met Swedish folk dance teacher Kris Druid-Sutton at the WA Folk Federation's 1975 New Year's Eve Bush Dance. Kris and husband Bob Sutton were planning to leave Australia but didn't know what to do with the pair of purple speakers they'd been donated by WAFF. Fortunately Eve decided that she could find a use for the purple speakers. By May 1976 Kris and Bob had left Perth, Eve and her pupils had inherited the pair of purple speakers, and the Perth International Folk Dance Group was firmly established. Twenty years later later PIFDG is still using the pair of purple speakers.

### FOLK DANCE IN WA 1971-1975

Notes supplied by John Watson after researching his old WAFF notes and Town Criers.

6 March 1971 - The newly-formed WAFF held a Scottish Dance workshop at Mundaring run by Peter Wright.

3 April 1971 - John Watson organised a folk dance afternoon at Currie Hall with Betty Goodchild leading Scottish Country Dance and Peter Jansen leading European dancing. About 20-30 people attended.

June 1971 - The first WAFF festival was held, with Satrija, the Lithuanian National Folk Dance Group performing in the main concert and a Ceilidh (mainly Scottish) in the Nedlands Masonic Hall.

9 September 1971 - John Watson appealed in Town Crier for interested people to form a folk dance group.

3 June 1972 - An International Folk Dance Night held at the Second WAFF festival at Subiaco Civic Centre. Judged a huge success. (Performances by Scottish, Lithuanian, Irish, Indian, Square and Highlands groups).

19 August 1972 - A meeting held by WAFF to set up a folk dance club.

9 September 1972 - First meeting of new folk dance club (not called International Folk Dance until May 1974). Planned to meet second and fourth Sunday nights at The Stables in Malcolm Street, Perth.

October 1972 - Folk Dance Club reported as "flourishing". In November was reported as "firmly established".

December 1972 - Moved to 60 Havelock Street, West Perth, as Stables too small.

31 December 1972 - Folk Dance Club organised WAFF New Years Eve Dance at a Mundaring chook shed.

4 February 1973 - Arthur Weston ran a Balkan Dance Workshop.

2 June 1973 - 2nd International Dance held at 3rd WAFF festival at Subiaco Civic Centre. Dancers from Denmark, Scotland, England, Ukraine, Croatia, Singapore, Japan, Aboriginal.

June 1973 onwards - Folk Dance Club and Bush Band start monthly folk dances in Colin Street, West Perth - mostly Scottish, Irish set dances, but usually had a visiting group to demonstrate and sometimes teach their own ethnic dances - Greek, Lithuanian and Morris.

March 1974 - Kris Druid-Sutton first mentioned in Town Crier.  
Perth Morris Men formed.

27 May 1974 - First International Folk Dance workshop held in CATS Building, 30 Museum Street, Perth.

1 June 1974 - International Folk Dance at the 4th WAFF festival in the Refectory, Guild Building UWA. Scandinavian, Scottish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Morris, American, Square and Australian.

September 1974 - First mention in Town Crier of regular Monday night workshops for International Folk Dance held at 30 Museum Street, Perth.

7 March 1975 - Second Minifest at UWA. International Dance programme included Scottish, Danish, Greek, German/Austrian and Lithuanian

Pam Gunn has done some detective work about the origins of PIFDG and takes up the story:

## **EARLY CHRONICLES      by Pam Gunn**

As far as we can ascertain, international folk dancing was introduced to Perth by Arthur Weston (originally from the USA), Kris Druid-Sutton (from Sweden) and John Watson of the WA Folk Federation, we think in 1971/1972.

Some of the early participants were Naomi Segal, Bob Sutton, Mary Drake, Helen Tyrell, Ken Pinches and Robyn (Yutika) Juniper who remembers being asked to announce that the group was meeting regularly in 1973 on her radio programme on the ABC .

By December 1975, the number of participants had dwindled to only a handful but, fortunately, Eve and David Blair had just arrived after two years in the USA where international folk dancing was all the rage on University campuses. Eve and David brought with them many new dances and also reels of taped music. [Ed: This meeting seems to rival the momentous meeting of Livingstone and Stanley in deepest Africa as a catalyst for something important as Eve says that the fate of the purple speakers set her on the path of teaching international folk dance in Perth.]

So 1976 saw a re-activated group meeting on Monday nights in a now demolished building in Museum Street, Northbridge (where the State Library is now). Kris and Eve shared the teaching until about May 1976 when Kris and Bob departed for Africa. Eve (by that time four months pregnant with Palenque) was then the main teacher with some help from David and the occasional visiting teacher. I think Eve only missed one week when Palenque was born!

I stated coming to dancing in May 1976, just before Kris and Bob left, at the encouragement of David Blair whom I had met in the UWA Physics Department on my return from living in the U.K. There were 30 to 40 people present on my first night and there were two visiting young men teaching cossack-style dancing - lots of leg kicking whilst squatting type of thing.. Next day I was so stiff I could hardly walk and very nearly did not come back the following week! Fortunately I persevered and have been doing so for twenty years.

The first performance I remember watching was at the Fremantle Arts Centre where I remember Mary Drake bursting into peals of laughter when she made a mistake.

The first performance I myself was in was at the Quakers Annual Fair up in Darlington. After the show I remember a woman complimenting us for being so clever to be able to dance so many different dances all to the same tune!

As the person who established PIFDG, Eve Blair was asked to write about it's history. Her story follows:

## **THE HISTORY OF PIFDG**

**by Eve Blair**

**April 1996**

History always strikes me as a bloodless word. People make stories, then a historian sucks out all the blood and you are left with the skeleton on which the story was hung. So this is no history, only my stories - I'll include what dates and locations I can remember.

I taught my first dance (Ciuleandra) in approx March 1976 in a first floor hall in Museum Street, Perth. I'd practised for days and may even have temporarily sorted out my right foot from my left. Unfortunately that hall was demolished to make way for the Alexander Library and my ability to differentiate right from left was evidently demolished with it. We moved to St. Brigid's Hall in Fitzgerald Street.

The performance group was an early initiative. We had just come from the USA where people found dressing up very important. The dancers made some little red skirts and we were christened at our first performance when, just as we were about to run on, the organiser turned to me and whispered "How do I introduce you?" Stage fright prevented me from creating a catchy acronym in 0.5 seconds and we've been stuck with the uncharismatic Perth International Folk Dance Group for the following twenty years, despite attempts at amelioration. The performance group has persisted and, thanks to Bernie, great strides have been made in costuming. It's been the source of headaches and acrimony but also some good stories: the time we leapt onto the highly polished floor at the Tawarri Lodge to land flat on our backs (lesson number one, always test the performing surface BEFORE the performance), in the gymnasium of the College of Performing Arts at Mount Lawley (who invited us there!) when one of our number proudly concluded with a flourish delivered to the back wall - it's a pity we haven't yet found anyone to translate S!IT into Bulgarian (or Romanian or Turkish). Maybe Joe could help us in Hungarian?

### **Shell Folkloric Concert in 1981**

One memorable performance was at the Shell Folkloric Concert at the Concert Hall. That was in 1981 (n.b. an historical fact). I remember that date because they brought my costume into King Edward Hospital for me to try on, just after Carl was born. I rushed into the shower to pull it on and emerged triumphantly. They had omitted to point out to me that it was usually worn over a long petticoat because in the front, the skirt was split to the waist!! The concert was memorable for Gary Dawson's choreography and the little energetic prima donna who tried to knock some performance polish into us (he realised that gentle polishing was not going to get anywhere fast enough). To our shock/horror he told us in no uncertain terms that we should be running through the performance ten times each rehearsal (was that at double speed?) so that we should be able to do it effortlessly when actually performing.....and we had fondly assumed that the aim of a performance was to get the steps right. We never performed at the Shell concert again - it was not really our style. What IS our style? Well - I'm not sure you find it anywhere in Europe.



## Restaurants

Restaurants were another early initiative. We tried a Lebanese restaurant on Beaufort Street to celebrate Palenque's 2 weekly-versary. We tucked the guest of honour under the table, but it was such a great evening, that we completely forgot to retrieve our belongings from under the table when we left. Our favourite haunt in those days was butcher Mick's Balkan restaurant on William Street. The Happy Bosnaks (cheese and ham stuffed into a schnitzel) covered one's entire plate and finishing one of these gave one the same crowning sense of achievement as downing a yard of ale I was told - I never did either. It was our favourite restaurant because he let us take over the place, play our tapes, push the tables back and dance, and gave us home made liqueurs (meths?) after dinner. The food was good and cheap and generous and the service was terrible. One night we arrived and he scowlingly told us that he couldn't serve us, his waitress had just walked out. I offered to help out and learnt why she left: he never said please or thank you and I had to duck the things he threw at me when things weren't working out. However I watched him slay lettuces karate style - wished I could have mastered the art and wondered if he had learnt the approach from butchering animals. We took Mihai David (visiting Romanian dance teacher via USA) there and I asked him to show me Invertita. He danced it with me, or in spite of me. Exhilarating! but alas I never learnt it.

We've had lots of visiting teachers, who gave us the idea for the week-ends at Dept of Youth Sport and Recreation camps which we continue now even without exotic out-of-town teachers. For some visitors, once was enough: rubber Rolando from Mexico via Sydney took us on in Freo, Krishnan Nair gave a workshop at the Leederville Primary School, culminating in us giving a performance of Indian dance at UWA (!), Caaba Palfi (from Hungary) and Nancy from Greece (via Sydney) gave us workshops at the Peninsular Community Centre. Others were gluttons for punishment. Bora (who was punishing who?) with whom we took on the fairy penguins and kitchen mice at Penguin Island, introduced me to the Turkish community and then fell out with them. He came back a year later at Mount Lawley WACAE. Yves Moreau and Mihai David both came twice from North America and Gary Dawson made it over from Sydney at least three times as did Al Weideman from Washington State - first bringing Baikan dances and then Scandinavian dance. Jaap (a part time professional dance teacher) and Marianne stayed for 6 months on their honeymoon around the world before setting down to Dutch family life.

In that first decade it was relatively difficult to persuade teachers across the oceans and the desert and I went to get the dances from Bulgaria and London (1978), China (1980 - but they were too exotic!), Macedonia (1983) and San Diego (1985).

## Second Decade

The second decade has been easier. I have a larger repertoire and I have been joined by Frances Young (USA), by Sara Friedman (with her wealth of Israeli dances), Yves Paliern (from France), Fiona Murdoch (from New Zealand with a Scottish background) and by John Whaite who both travelled to the courses held by Andre van de Plas in Sydney and then took on middle Europe, and most recently by the home grown Palenque. (She should be good at role-playing dances - she was taking the role of the pillow in the pillow dance months before she was born.) But I

still love going away for a weekend with a new dance teacher and immersing myself in a pool of new dances. Recent visiting teachers have included Andre van der Plas from Holland, Mihai David (again), and Belcho Stanev from Bulgaria whom I have yet to meet. They say that Belcho's next workshop will be our last at Point Peron (though they have said that before). If it really IS the last, it will signify the passing of an era - but an era which is already almost gone - an era in which there were no fences and one wandered over the sand dunes in the full moon for communal midnight skinny dipping - to return to find some poor awakened soul pacing the dorm with a 3- month-old in her arms wondering where the hell the Mum had disappeared to. Of starting the evening dance with a swig of Schnapps and then continuing till 2am in the morning with your feet screaming, collapsing back in Perth at 5pm on Sunday evening too tired to move till Monday morning.

My bones now object more strongly..... alas.

PIFDG is twenty, it's come of age, it's matured, it's much more technologically sophisticated (thanks to John), it's independent. I watch with parental interest and thank everyone, who helped create it, for lots of stories.

## **BITS AND PIECES ABOUT PIFDG                      by John Whaite**

When I joined PIFDG, in about 1978, the group was meeting in St. Bridget's Convent in Fitzgerald Street, Northbridge. Eve was the teacher. From there, I think we moved to West Leederville Primary School, and then to the Peninsula Community Centre. Members of the group were very active in the Peninsula Association especially David Blair, Pam Gunn and me. [Ed: Participation in working bees was a requirement of using the premises.]

When the Ethnic Music Centre of WA started, Lindsey Pollak invited us to dance at the North Perth Town Hall rent free. Lindsey was one of the driving forces behind the formation of the centre and wanted to include dance in its activities. We had several "village green" functions with Lindsey and other musicians. (Ed: Unfortunately the hall did not remain rent free so a new meeting place was sought).

When I started there was a performance group with one costume for the men consisting of knickerbockers, white shirts and red cummerbunds. I think the women wore full circle floral skirts and white blouses. I remember performing without shoes (and very badly). The performance standard took off when we decided to perform in the Shell Folkloric Festival in the Perth Concert Hall in maybe 1982. For that event we had special coats made (red with blue stripes), and we made Bulgarian pointy shoes and belts. As I recall it, people in the performance were Eve Blair, Peter Carter, Maggie Johnson, Step and Jan, Paul and Joyce Wolfe, Pam Gunn, Sue Hall, Ross Lander, Peter Kontor, me and maybe Peter Fallon.

PIFDG was incorporated in 1987. [Ed: Mostly due to John's efforts.]

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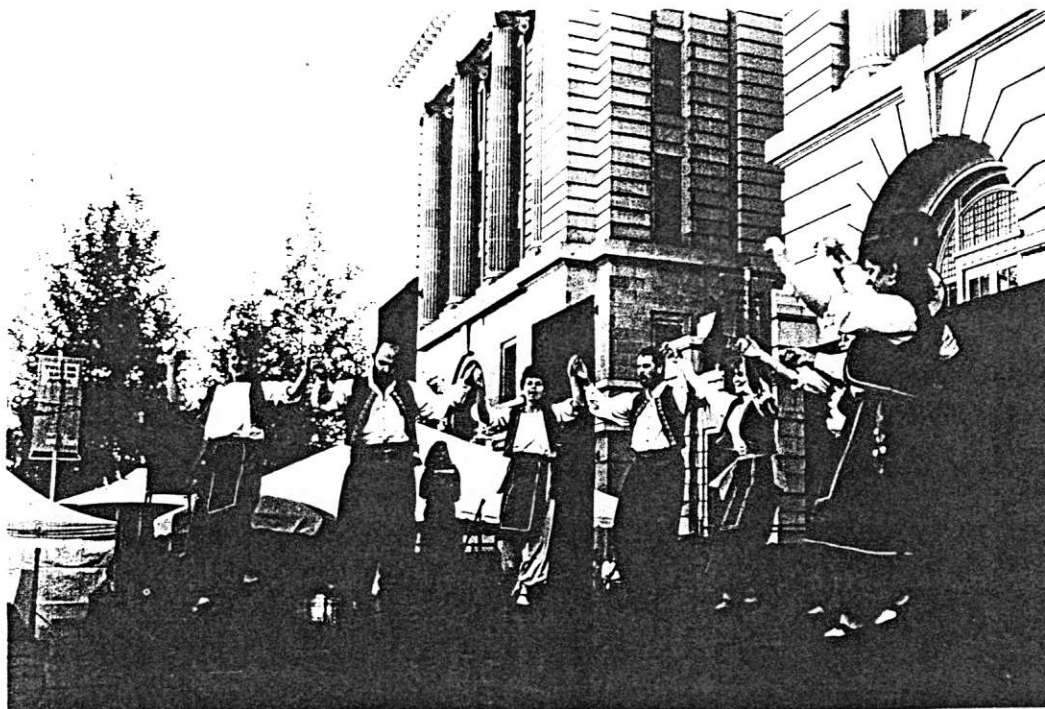
(Cont) The first residential workshop that I have any dated record of is a Point Peron workshop on 10-12 February 1984 with Eve following her Yugoslav tour. However, I have an undated information sheet for Fri 29 January to 31 January which is possibly the first at Point Peron with Bulgarian (Eve), Polish (Andrea Majewska) and Israeli (Sara) and it could not have been 1984, 1985 or 1986. The dates correspond to 1982. I recall cooking a sheep at one of the early workshops (possibly the undated one I have just referred to) which mentions that the cost was \$20 including meals. I think the work that went into cooking the sheep was too much, so from then on we had "everyone brings a dish to share".

The first Grapevine newsletter was in December 1989 with Glenn Huxtable as editor. The next edition in February 1990 announced the advent of the PIFDG T-shirt and a picnic in King's Park [Ed: And also gave notes about the dances taught.] The T-shirt was designed by Peta Madgwick and Fiona Murdoch.

A competition was held for a design for the PIFDG logo with the prize being a free workshop at Point Peron. It was won by Terry Manley in the nick of time just prior to his bicycling off to the eastern states. This was probably in 1991.

## PIFDG's TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

PIFDG is delighted that former teacher and member Fiona Murdoch has come from New Zealand for our twentieth anniversary celebrations. Another teacher in the second decade was Frances Young who has returned to her native USA with husband Roger. They have sent us a letter and faxed greetings from Oklahoma USA for our twentieth anniversary and which includes this rather good description of PIFDG - **"twenty years of amazing feets"**!



SOME "AMAZING FEETS" IN FORREST PLACE - DANCE WEEK 1994  
L-R: Michaela Hill, Glenn Huxtable, Pam Williams, John Whaite, Eve Blair,  
....., Bernie McGinn.