

How IVC started.

by Reg Simeone

The idea of IVC was conceived in May 1946 in the Scotch House Tea Rooms in Cambridge. Michael Wolff and I, both undergraduates at St. John's College, were having tea there and we were talking about the informal dances I was then running in Cambridge for the International Students' Service. We were regretting that there would be no dances of this type during the long vacation. Then the idea came. Why, we asked, should we not run such dances ourselves? We both lived in London where there must be many students on vacation wanting to continue the sort of social life they enjoyed during term time; we would enjoy running dances; a lot of people ought to get fun out of them; and with any luck, we might even make a small profit!

The first activities

The more we talked about the idea the better we liked it. We managed to raise enough money to pay for the hire of halls and bands and for advertising. And then we set about planning six fortnightly dances spread over the summer vacation of 1946. Most were in the Chelsea Town Hall but for two occasions this was already booked and we went to St. Pancras instead. We thought that ideally the dances should be run by a Club so that attendances could be suitably restricted. We were not then in a position to set up a properly organised Club although we intended to do this if the dances were a success. However, we anticipated this by inventing the name 'Intervarsity Vacation Club' (IVC) and we advertised the dances under this name. We also enrolled members which gave us a mailing list for future use; but as the Club did not exist as a legal entity we did not charge a membership fee.

Promoting the new Club...

We trudged around Cambridge and London putting up our posters and making contact with the Students' Unions. This brought in a membership of several hundred but we did not know still if people would come to the dances. We waited the first dance early in July with bated breath; to our great relief it was a success. Some of the other dances were also successful while others were not so well attended. But we broke even financially and the idea of an Inter-Varsity Vacation Club had clearly caught the imagination. When the summer's dances ended, we were encouraged by people from many universities to follow the idea through by setting up a real Club and making the dances a regular feature of vacation life in London. There were enough genuine offers of help to make the effort worthwhile and we agreed to do so.