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Minutes of the Morris Ring ARM

6th March 2021

Minutes of the 2021 Morris Ring Annual Representatives' Meeting, 6th March 2021

The meeting opened with the Squire welcoming representatives from the other JMO members and holding two minutes of silence in memory of those who passed in the last year.

1. Attendees and apologies

Sides represented:

Adlington	Green Oak	Plymouth
Aldbury	Greensleeves	Ravensbourne
Anker	Harthill	Redding Moreys
Barnsley	Hartley	Richmond on Swale
Benfieldside	Helmond	Saddleworth
Bourne River	Ilmington	Shakespeare
Brackley	Jockey	St Albans
Cambridge	Kennet	Stafford
Chanctonbury Ring	King John's	Sweyn's Ey
Chester	Kingston Spring Grove	Taylor's Morris
Chipping Camden	Kinnerton	Thaxted
Claro Longsword	Knightlow	Thelwall
Dartington	Leicester	Trigg
Devil's Dyke	Letchworth	Utrecht
Dolphin	Long Man	Wadard
Earlsdon	Lord Conyers	West Somerset
East Suffolk	Manchester	Whitchurch
East Surrey	Mayflower	White Hart
Exeter	Mersey	Winchester
Faithful City	Morris 18-30	Woodside
First Class Stamp	Moulton	Yateley
Fools and Beasts	Original Welsh Border	
Green Man	Peterborough	

Plus Jen Cox, Malcolm Hills (Open Morris) and Fee Lock, Pauline Woods-Wilson (Morris Federation)

2. Minutes of the 2020 meeting were circulated with Newsletter 118 in November 2020

Accepted, proposed Pete Simpson, Seconded Ed Worrall

3. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

4. Officers' reports (the reports are located in the appendix below):

a. Squire of the Morris Ring

Accepted, proposed Steve Holder Jockey, Seconded Joe Vincent Dartington

b. Bagman of the Morris Ring

Accepted, proposed Nick Appleyard, Richmond on Swale, seconded Colin Andrews, Exeter

c. Treasurer of the Morris Ring

The Treasurer presented a summary of the accounts – little change from last year as little expenditure and no subscriptions income. Sides who have “donated” by not cancelling their subscription standing order should contact the Treasurer asap if they wish for a refund. Accounts are healthy, £91k in bank. There is an expectation that the number of sides will reduce in 2021/2 due to the pandemic.

Accepted, proposed Pete Simpson, seconded Steve Holder, Jockey

THE MORRIS RING - ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020							
	GENERAL FUND	MORRIS SHOP	ARCHIVE FUND	YOUTH FUND	RESERVE FUND	2020 TOTAL	2019
INCOME	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
SUBSCRIPTIONS:							
Members	2,570.01					2,570.01	6,285.00
Associates	245.00					245.00	1,050.00
Joint Members	30.00					30.00	90.00
Individual publications	0.00					0.00	17.00
SALES							
Income from sales		1,273.44				1,273.44	2,014.03
Change in stock		0.00				0.00	-2,053.93
Less Purchase of stock		0.00				0.00	2,540.00
Less Other Shop costs		0.00				0.00	0.00
Surplus on Meetings	0.00					0.00	646.98
DONATIONS/INTEREST							
Donations	8,000.00	0.00	20.00	10.00	0.00	8,030.00	3,110.01
Bank Interest Received	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.95	187.53	189.48	200.67
Charity Fund						0.00	0.00
Other Income	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	70.00
Total Income	10,845.01	1,273.44	20.00	11.95	187.53	12,337.93	13,969.76

		-					
<i>Prior year 2019</i>	£8,158.98	£2,579.90	£3,045.00	£69.34	£196.34	£8,889.76	
EXPENDITURE							
Insurance	1,575.65					1,575.65	1,596.50
Cost of Circular & Newsletter	50.00					50.00	59.82
OFFICERS EXPENSES							
Squire	0.00					0.00	44.25
Bagman	0.00					0.00	130.00
Treasurer	114.82					114.82	294.25
Other travel	0.00					0.00	0.00
General Expenses Paid:							
AC Meeting costs	0.00					0.00	0.00
Advertising	0.00					0.00	0.00
Archive costs			75.00			75.00	28.90
ARM Costs	994.10					994.10	920.75
Events	0.00					0.00	0.00
General Overhead Expenses etc	846.14					846.14	99.08
Jigs weekend subsidy	103.00					103.00	562.15
JMO AGM expenses	51.40					51.40	218.55
Ring meeting costs (£500 subsidy per host)	0.00					0.00	400.00
Ring meeting costs (Officer attendance etc.)	0.00					0.00	255.00
Youth activities				0.00		0.00	0.00
Website	305.00					305.00	755.00
Other costs	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Charitable donations	250.00		0.00	0.00		250.00	500.00
Total Expenditure	4,290.11	0.00	75.00	0.00	0.00	4,365.11	5,864.25
<i>prior year 2019</i>	£5,835.35	£0.00	£103.90	£0.00	£0.00		
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR	6,554.90	1,273.44	-55.00	11.95	187.53	7,972.82	2,950.51
		-					
<i>prior year 2019</i>	£2,323.63	£2,579.90	£2,941.10	£69.34	£196.34	£2,950.51	
FUND BALANCE:							
Brought forward from	11,424.72	2,685.17	6,479.42	2,363.1	60,739.37	83,691.85	87,430.00

2019				7			
Transferred to (from) Reserve Fund							
Surplus/Deficit for year	6,554.90	1,273.44	-55.00	11.95	187.53	7,972.82	3,940.00
Carried forward	17,979.62	3,958.61	6,424.42	2,375.12	60,926.90	91,664.67	91,370.00
MADE UP OF:-							
Cash at Bank	17,979.62	3,958.61	6,424.42	2,375.12	60,926.90	91,664.67	91,370.00
Cash in hand		0.00				0.00	
Value at cost of Stocks held for resale		11,579.88				11,579.88	11,579.88
Fund balance at year end	17,979.62	15,538.49	6,424.42	2,375.12	60,926.90	103,244.55	102,949.88

- d. Chairman of the Advisory Council
Accepted, proposed Nick Vincent, Dartington, seconded Emma Melville, First Class Stamp.
- e. Morris Ring Archive Group
John Jenner offered copies of past Circulars for digitisation. He asked whether the location of the collecting box was known.
- f. Webmaster and publications
See report.
- g. Overseas Bagman
See report.

5. Elections (Bagman and Area Reps)
Elected unanimously – 33-0.

Area Representatives (year of re-election in brackets)

East Midlands, Charlie Corcoran (2021)

South Midlands, Roger Comley (2021)

Northern, Jono Millward (2021) – Darren Nugent (Harthill)

West Midlands, Peter Austin (2023) – Matthew Turvey (Shakespeare)

South East, Fred Hands (2021)

Ratified by the areas.

6. Area Representatives' Reports

East Midlands – Charlie Corcoran – report in appendix

South Midlands – Roger Comley – report in appendix

North West – Dave Loughlin – report in appendix

North East – Brian Pollard – nothing to report

North – report unavailable

West Midlands – Pete Austin – report in appendix

Eastern – Nigel Strudwick – discussed the end of lockdown as an opportunity to promote the morris and restart performance

South East – Fred Hands – report in appendix

South West and Wales – Paul Reece – several sides (Sweyn's Ey and Trigg) have made efforts to continue practising, other sides have been keeping in touch; proposed Ring Meeting for July dependent on pandemic conditions

7. Discussion: a Squire's commission on revisions to the Constitution of the Morris Ring. The Squire's proposal for a commission on the Constitution has been publicised (see appendix below).

Ken Smith (Mayflower) – will there be a cap on legal expenditure for any advice sought? The Squire will determine what is reasonable in conjunction with the commission.

John Jenner (Cambridge) – Constitution requires total revision.

Ian Nichols (Taylor's) – queried selection if there are too many volunteers. The Squire replied that the commission would represent the membership and the limit of 20 is not necessarily fixed. Applications are open for another week.

Dudley Binding (West Somerset) – recalled the creation of the Constitution.

8. Discussion: use of full-face black makeup for morris and mumming.

Pete Simpson: need to recognise the implications that people are offended by blacking-up, regardless of the reasons or explanations for doing so.

Charlie Corcoran: request for an interim statement for public record as follows.

"Member sides should not use any solid full-face coloured makeup or disguise which could be taken by a reasonable observer to imitate or parody a skin colour different from their own."

Emma Melville: no intention to give offence.

Ken Smith, reading on behalf of Mayflower's squire: banning a tradition involves rejecting sides who follow that tradition; the freedom to make their own decisions is being denied those sides.

Ed Worrall: the time has passed when this issue needs addressing and the meeting should vote on the statement.

Pat Herlihy, Shakespeare: incident on Jockey's plough tour, took a role in justifying the use of black face paint, no longer able to do so as there is no strong moral argument in its favour (as a diversity trainer for the police).

Clive duMont, Whitchurch: wants assurance that alternative routes have been explored with government to protect historical folk practices?

Ed Worrall: the legal framework on harassment would not permit legislative change; the issue here is racial harassment in the current social context (last five years). No clear evidence of the origins of this tradition.

Simon Newman, Squire: Ring has to abide by the Equality Act and demonstrate that; this is about protecting the Ring.

Parvez Ellahee, Earlsdon: teams have a responsibility to the Ring and society to demonstrate respect and follow rules. Kit has changed over the years, why not change face colouring?

George Clapton, Manchester: need for positive presentation of the morris to all cultures.

Mike Garland, East Suffolk: what is tradition? Few can answer. Young people regard it as what happened, not how it happened.

Ian Nichols, Taylor's: concerned that nothing is here to address the issue as the proposals were withdrawn, supporting the proposal.

Jon Melville, Bagman: cannot mount a legal defence (this has been explored at length and there is insufficient robust documentary evidence); need to consider reputational damage and loss of insurance.

Nick Appleyard, Richmond on Swale: additional potential for loss of venues, bookings and opportunities.

Phil Butlin, East Surrey: a bad strategy to tell people they should not be offended – change behaviour. This is the right thing to do.

John Weaver, Brackley: requested confirmation of the wording.

Roger Stanway, Kinnerton: clarification on wording.

Vote held on the statement: For 45 Against 1

Proposal passed. Statement will be published and shared with the membership.

9. Ring candlesticks

The photograph in the appendix shows a candlestick which matches the stands for the Squire's staff, designed by Joe Oldaker and custom made by Hart's silversmiths in Chipping Campden. It is awaiting collection and presentation to the Ring. This is to be dedicated to absent friends.

Geoff Wells, Hartley: Sephton candlesticks have been in service since 1967.

Squire: need to consider their future.

Pete Simpson: thanks to Hartley. Echoed by Ed Worrall, who suggested they be returned to Hartley.

Paul Reece: seconded the proposal of returning to Hartley.

10. Orchard Morris Project

The Ring has agreed to underwrite the activities of the Orchard Morris Project in delivering workshops. George Clapton (Manchester) outlined similar activities undertaken by his side. Mike Garland (East Suffolk) said the Ring would be continuing with youth workshops in the East. Jen Cox (Chair, Open Morris) offered their support.

11. Future events

JMO postponed. Coventry day of dance likely to be postponed. All other events to be considered provisional.

Paul Reece, Trigg/Plymouth: proposed Ring Meeting will now be celebrating the 401st anniversary of the Mayflower. It will only be a weekend event if numbers are sufficient.

Rob Chisman, Fools and Beasts: possible meeting in Plymouth or the Wirral in October.

Rob Evans, Thaxted: their weekend will be postponed.

Ollie Simons, Peterborough: Ring Meeting will take place in late September.

Ed Worrall: Saddleworth's Rushcart will run if at all possible.

Peter Austin: One Day Wonders in Warwickshire in October.

Geoff Pitt: Letchworth Ring Meeting (at Shuttleworth College/Collection) in planning.

Parvez Ellahee, Earlsdon: 50th anniversary annual tour will take place in October.

George Clapton, Manchester's 91st anniversary events may still take place.

Geoff Wells, Hartley: for their 70th anniversary in 2022, they are planning an event.

12. Date of next meeting

Oak Farm Lodge is booked for 5th March 2022. Thanks to Peter Copley (Stafford) for organising. They may be able to support online streaming for those unable to attend as well.

13. Any other business

Emma Melville, Dolphin Morris, re Sally Wearing: proposing a vote of thanks for her hard work on Covid guidance. Seconded by Geoff Pitt (Letchworth), updated on the website by Pete de Courcy.

Parvez Ellahee, Earlsdon: proposed extending the Squire's term of office to give him an opportunity to participate in more than just the lockdown politics. To be considered by the Advisory Council. Emma Melville, First Class Stamp: Squires take office in the summer and should be able to participate in the expected public activities. Pete Simpson, Chair of the Advisory Council: Advisory Council could appoint an interim Squire but could only change terms of office subject to a proposal from the membership. Linda Pound, Earlsdon: good Squires need a longer tenure. Clayton Francis, Treasurer: need to also consider terms of office for Bagman and Treasurer to ensure all officers do not change at once.

Paul Bryan, Ilmington: queried membership payments, being investigated by the Treasurer.

Nigel Cox, Whitchurch: can we refer to Peter Austin as Cheesy?

Simon Newman, Squire: proposed a vote of thanks to the outgoing Bagman, Jon Melville.

Appendices – reports and other documentation

4. Officers' reports

a) Squire of the Morris Ring

Squire's Report

Since taking office at the end of August 2020 I have been engaged in a number of processes on behalf the Ring membership. These include but are not limited to:

1. Collaborating with the FED and OPEN to compose a letter to Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport seeking guidance on the rule of 6 and the ability to practice. We received a letter in response that ultimately did not address the questions posed. Once it is safe and reasonable to do so we may again be writing to the Secretary of State for clear guidance if needed.

As part of our collaboration within the JMO I attended the Morris Federations AGM, a process that took over 5 hours to complete. This was done successfully and demonstrates that when the membership is willing, online participation in events is achievable.

2. Meeting the Advisory Council; during this meeting a number of questions were asked about how the Ring could implement the statement it made with the JMO committing to change and ending the practice of full face black make up in performance.

During this discussion a number of constitutional issues were highlighted and a decision was made that a proposed change to constitution was needed. Ideas were shared and feedback was received on which areas of the constitution could prove problematic.

3. Drafting the proposals: A considerable amount of time was spent drafting the proposals that went to the membership; feedback from the advisory council was sought during this process. The language used in the proposals used language already within the constitution, thus aiming to reduce the ambiguity that exists.

4. Google Group discussions: the discussions on the google group around the proposed constitutional changes highlighted a number of issues that have ultimately led to the proposals being withdrawn. I'd like to thank everyone who was proactive in offering constructive feedback. Ultimately we are here to serve the membership. It is important that any changes to our constitution adhere to the Ring's principles and are lasting. This has led to the setting up of the squire's commission.

5. Setting up the Commission: this is currently an ongoing process. I'd like to thank the members who have come forward expressing their interest in taking part. Please see the subsequent information for more details of this.

At this point I would like to re-iterate the commitment I made to serve the membership in continuing to bring the Ring forward, building upon the hard work of my predecessors. I am hugely aware that change is difficult, that we might not understand the reasons why change

is needed but unfortunately change is always necessary in order for progress to be made. As an association we risk becoming irrelevant in the wider Morris community, the recent Morris census demonstrates the trend for new teams, some of which are outstanding performers, to go to the other organisations.

The Ring has a long and proud history of fellowship and tradition, our experience and our expertise in these areas are our best strength yet we risk losing it all in the long term if we fail to adapt to the society in which we operate.

For many, the last year may have been a very difficult time for numerous reasons, To those struggling I wish to ask them to hold on to the hope, the vaccine is here, the feasts will be back, the days of dance and the Ring meetings will happen again because our members are willing.

I would like to thank the area reps for the work that they are doing to keep teams connected and informed. I'd especially like to thank Dave Loughlin and Tony Foard for their continued commitment to organising the JMO Day of dance in Liverpool, now looking to take place in Spring 2022. I'd like to thank the advisory council for welcoming me into the fold and for their efforts in supporting me during my first six months. I'd like to thank Pete Simpson for his advice and for holding on to the Squire's medal, keeping it safe and shiny until there is a time we can exchange it properly. I also want to restate my admiration for all the team officers who have found innovative ways to keep their sides connected during the past year.

Finally I want to give Jon Melville a huge thank you for the enormous amount of energy and commitment he has given serving the Ring as the Bagman. When the opportunity arises I would like us all to raise a glass to him.

Thank You,

Simon Newman

The Squire's Commission

Over the last decade or so the Morris Ring has been engaged in numerous divisive discussions, whether allowing women to join as musicians to more recently as dancers. The current topic is of course 'black face'. What these episodes demonstrate is that the Ring constitution only allows the association to react to social changes as they present, leading to discussions on constitutional changes that are for the most part reactionary. The Ring needs a constitution that can pre-empt social and political change, allowing our members to adapt and overcome changes as they occur within society, allowing us to get on with what we actually want to do, and that is perform.

Potential problems for the Ring going forward may include:

- Accusations of discrimination based on gender identify e.g. members of the trans community objecting to men dressing up as women.

- Accusations of members looking for loopholes in government restrictions designed to keep us safe e.g. COVID
- Accusations of discrimination based on ethnicity e.g. blackface
- Accusations of discrimination based on disability

The commission will be formed with the intent to explore the current constitution, highlight any potential pitfalls and work together to ensure that the constitution will be lasting for the next generation of performers.

Aims of the Commission:

- Ensure the Morris Ring Objectives and Core values are upheld
- Ensure the Morris Ring operates lawfully as an association and that any relevant documentation is shared with members enabling them to do so.
- Ensure the Morris Ring as an association has the appropriate safeguards in place to protect itself, its officers and its members from prosecution or external forces that may bring it into disrepute e.g. claims of public liability; claims of harassment; claims of discriminatory practice.

Potential questions for the constitution:

- Do all the definitions make sense, is the language explicit in its meaning or vague? Is the language accessible to members with either learning or language difficulties?
- Do all the subheadings describe the clauses beneath them?
- Are the procedures explicit e.g. who can make proposals?
- Are the procedures appropriate?

Procedures

Recruitment: Members of the commission will be recruited from the wider membership. This is to allow a range of voices to be heard, the Ring is an association of clubs, it is important that those who wish to participate are given the opportunity to apply.

Members will not be discriminated against based on protected characteristics described in the Equality Act 2010.

The recruitment process is currently open and will END on the 13th March 2021, one week after the ARM.

If you wish to express your interest please email me squire@themorrisring.org

The Chair retains the right to limit the size of the commission to no more than 20 members. Members may join or be recruited to the commission during the process at the discretion of the Chair.

The Chair retains the right to eject members of the commission if their behaviour puts other members at risk of harm.

Timing: The commission will begin proceedings from the March 2021 ARM and will be set up to meet as many times as they see necessary in order to get the intended business done. The commission will end when data saturation is reached or 4 months before the date of the 2022 ARM depending on which comes first.

Chair: The commission will be chaired by myself or by an appointed deputy chair with my oversight. Any appointed deputy chair will be voted for by the members of the commission.

Meetings: each meeting will have an agenda, members of the commission will be invited to add items for discussion as they see necessary. Meetings will last as long as needed. Members of the commission will have an open forum to discuss the items on the agenda.

Transparency; minutes will be taken during each meeting and shared with the members within 12 months of the Commission's completion. Members and researchers will need to obtain access to the Morris Ring archives for access.

Members of the commission have a right to engage in discussion on or of the record.

Confidentiality: Members of the commission have a right to confidentiality meaning that archived minutes may contain redactions if necessary.

Any personal data that is collated during this process will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Expenses: members of the commission will be able to claim back travel expenses in the event that meetings take place in person.

If legal advice is requested by the commission, the Ring will pay for the expense if it is deemed reasonable in the best interest of the association.

Reporting Outcomes: The commission will be asked to produce a report no later than four months before the 2022 ARM. This will enable any recommendations that may arise to be shared with the advisory council as well as the wider membership to be ratified in accordance with the three month notice period required in the current constitution.

These procedures may be subject to review if deemed necessary by the Chair. Any amendments to the procedures will require a simple majority approval by members of the commission.

Simon Newman

Squire, The Morris Ring 26/02/2021

b) Bagman of the Morris Ring

There used to be a myth that the job of the Ring Squire was to travel the country accepting hospitality in exchange for an occasional speech or song, telling everyone the Ring was OK. I don't know whether it was ever true, but I can say for certain that I have had the privilege to work alongside a collection of Squires who have worked tirelessly to transform the Morris Ring and its position in the folk community into an organisation fit, influential and relevant for the next generation.

Behind them in the engine room are a collection of officers, Area Reps, past officers, web experts and archivists working to keep the whole operation going without recognition or reward. In all, about twenty people or so. It is also noteworthy that these few individuals have also been instrumental in the organisation of most of the recent Ring Meetings, Instructionals and JMO Days of Dance.

Quietly, behind the scenes, this team operates to support, protect and update the Ring. We introduced Safeguarding and Data Protection policies before they became a legal requirement and have become experts in money-laundering legislation (although, sadly, not the money laundering itself) along the way. When Shrewsbury Folk Festival banned blacked-up morris sides in 2015, the team explored the Equality Act in detail and with appropriate guidance, predicted that the issue would become more significant in future and have been liaising with affected sides to promote change ever since.

It saddens me when that long-term proactivity meets with "knee-jerk reaction" accusations from those who take no part in the Ring other than to offer caustic criticism, and in some cases, highly personal insults. I would invite those who genuinely care about the future of the Ring to explore how they can support that small group of dedicated individuals in their roles.

I am leaving the job of Bagman behind for personal reasons which I hope will become apparent in time, but I should like to thank that small team of friends and colleagues for their efforts in support of myself and the Ring. With Simon and Pete in office, we shall have a Squire and Bagman both under the age of 35 and I am confident that the Ring is in safe hands for the next generation.

c) Treasurer of the Morris Ring

1 Introduction

This is my third Treasurers Report. At the time of writing, the accounts have nearly been completed and will be published, but I can confirm that our underlying finances are very sound and for another year I have no intention of changing the current subscription structure. As I'm sure the other officers have mentioned that 2020 will be remembered as the year that wasn't.

2 Membership

Standard renewals fees were unchanged;

Full	£60	Associate	£50	Joint	£40
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Early payment reduction if completed by November 30th;

Full	£50	Associate	£40	Joint	£30
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Lastly and on a positive note, the officers together took the decision that as there was no dancing there was also no need for the insurance cover and hence the 2021 fee was to be waived and covered by the Morris Ring on the assumption that we would be dancing together again sometime this year and to lessen the burden on Club's as they would have had no income in 2020. This was warmly received and actioned.

3 Insurance

Our insurance cover that is arranged as part of the JMO was in place for 2020 was with – Ansvar. which still give sides excellent value for money.

4 Classes of Membership

Our 2020 membership consists of;

Full	125
Associate	20
Joint	3

Overall membership is down slightly.

5 Ring Finances

The MR received a substantial bequest of £8,000 from a Mrs Westlake. As of writing this report, no decision has been made as to how best to use and recognise this very kind act. If you have any suggestions please email me in the first instance.

The Shop - attended no events 2020 after the ARM and was largely shutdown.

Archive Fund – continues to support this important work.

Youth Fund – continues to be supported thinly by the membership.

Other costs and reserves – I.e.Ring Officers, ARM and travel costs have continued to be managed at much lower levels.

6 General policy and financial reserves

Our finances are strong, we have a good level reserves and as I have already stated we are able to hold subscription rates at current levels. However, we have a stable to declining membership at the same time as the costs of insurance and postage increase. So, we must still be prudent.

7 Future Plans

I am not proposing any significant changes for the next round of renewals but want the current ones to bed in and move away from having to handle cheques.

Our reserves on deposit are sitting there. If anyone knows of any safe financial vehicles that can give a good rate of return with access, I would be more than willing to listen to it.

Regards,

19th February 2021



Clayton Francis

Treasurer

The Morris Ring

d) Chair of the Advisory Council

The Advisory Council had its regular meeting towards the end of October 2020. As is the way at the moment this was done via Zoom. Thanks to the Squire for setting that up. There has also been quite a bit of on line discussion over the last few months with the Squire seeking advice and information.

Naturally all the discussion has been dominated by two topics. Black face, Guising and its place in the modern day world of Morris Dancing and, of course, Covid 19.

Both these issues are on going and evolving as I write this report. Let's us hope that the vaccinations do their stuff in time for the JMO DoD in Liverpool to go ahead. Much work has gone into this event and it has been heavily affected by Covid19. In fact, it is about the only other thing that has been discussed.

Let's hope we can soon get back to what we all really want to be doing; dancing and playing music.

Stay safe.

Pete Simpson.

Chair of the Advisory Council.

e) Morris Ring Archive Group

Chairman	Chris Wildridge
Morris Ring Archivist and Keeper of the Paper Archive	Geoff Douglas
Keeper of the Photograph Archive	Duncan Broomhead
Keeper of the Sword Dance Archive	Phil Heaton
New Dance Collator	Colin Andrews
Keeper of the Logbooks	Charlie Corcoran
Member	Gordon Blunt
Member	John Edwards
Member	Mike Garland
Member	Derek Schofield
Member	Matt Simons
Member	John Frearson

Introduction

This report covers activities of the Group for the period from the ARM 2020 onwards.

MRAG Meetings 2020

The Group meeting in 2020 at the ARM was postponed. The annual report was submitted to the ARM.

Activities

Proof of Concept Project

The Covid-10 pandemic resulted in the Essex Record Office, in common with many other non-essential elements of local government has been closed for much of the year. No work on the project was possible.

Other activities

Record Offices usually do not include published material in deposits. They are concerned with primary, unpublished material. The Essex Record Office will, on occasion accept privately published material of significance to the Morris Ring. The Morris Ring Archivist and

Keeper of the Paper Archive, Geoff Douglas received the donation of 'The origins of the Men of Wight' written by Mike Butler, Publicity Officer of the Men of Wight.

The Chairman received an enquiry about the whereabouts of the Morris Ring's heart shaped collecting box. Enquiries of present and recent past officers were advised to be fruitless and a search of the database of the deposits in the MR Archive in Chelmsford produced no results so it is not in the ERO. It was given to the Morris Ring by Ernest Makepeace having been made by Winsome Bartlett.

The above led to enquiries about the early years of the Morris Ring Archive which are continuing. Any member of a Side who can offer their own recollections should contact the Chairman using the email address on the MR website.

Matt Simons and Peter de Courcy are cooperating in the digitisation of the Morris Dancer. It is a work in progress. The originals have been scanned by Matt from copies in his own collection, Peter's contribution being running the scanned images through an OCR programme and touching up the formatting for publication.

Photographic Archive Report for 2020 – Duncan Broomhead

Lockdown has given many people the opportunity to start new, Morris related projects, or catch up on old ones. This has resulted in 2020 being the busiest year ever, for the Ring Photographic Archive. At times I was almost overwhelmed with inquiries, at its peak, I was receiving over 40 per week, a fantastic, if somewhat daunting result.

I was contacted on an extensive range of topics, not only by members of the Morris Ring, but individuals and organisations outside the Ring, including one from South Africa. They covered local and family history, research for books, academic papers, team histories, personal research, old photographs and films. I have liaised with archives and archivists, including the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, the Morris Federation, and the Sword Dance Union, and several members of the Morris Ring Archive Group.

During the year, a good number of photos have also been sent to the Photographic Archive, a few were copies of 100-year-old photos, but most were a lot more recent, and included old Ring Meetings and Days of Dance.

At the moment, there isn't anybody in the MRAG with specific responsibility for archival film and video. I took it upon myself to arrange for some films from the Morris Ring Archive to be posted online. My thanks go to Peter de Courcy and Frank Lascelles for all their help. It is hoped that we can get even more archival films uploaded in the future.

NEW DANCE COLLABORATOR REPORT FEBRUARY 2021

Apart from a short-lived flurry of activity following last year's A.R.M. there have been few other additions to the records of new dance notation, and no enquiries about any new

dances. There is a Google sheet, New Morris Dance Records, which shows contributions since 2018.

Many sides, however, have now provided information about their repertoire to the morris dance database website, and this includes several sides who have developed their own 'tradition' or have made up dances in the style of existing traditions. These sides have been encouraged to deposit details of these dances with the New Dance Collaborator, either at the present time or at such time as the side may fold, with the assurance that the notation for a dance will not be made available to other sides without the permission of the side responsible for creating the dance.

It is increasingly common for sides to post on social media platforms videos of their performance, and these may include 'new' dances. Should another side wish to perform such dances, it would be appropriate to seek permission from the origination side, or at least acknowledge the source.

MORRIS DANCE DATABASE REPORT

In the last ten months of very limited live morris activity there has been a marked upsurge in contributions to the Morris Dance Database. Of all current sides world wide the vast majority now have some dances from their repertoire listed and many have their whole current repertoire listed.

Sides having part or all of repertoire listed:

86% of UK sides 72% of North American sides 73% of Australasian sides 100% rest of Europe

About 28% of sides have currently requested and have been given team editorial access

Nearly 4000 separate dances are listed. The breakdown according to style is:

Cotswold 1968	Border 938	Molly 118	North West 389
Garland 109	Stave 35	Rapper 28	Longsword 68
Percussive 162	Other 162		

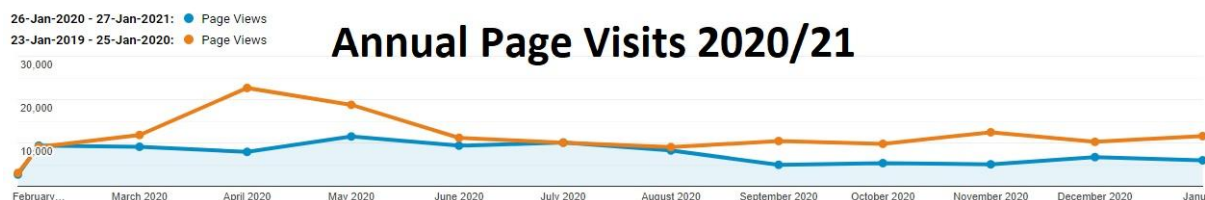
Thanks to the dedication from Anahata in working on the website, there have been a number of significant upgrades to the database in the last year. There is now an associated searchable tune database and in due course it is hoped that musical notation and abc notation can be added. It is now possible for a team to register a variation to a particular dance, and add a video link. This is part of a plan to establish provenance of dances that have been 'borrowed' or adapted. Up to three photographs of a team can be posted on their page. Over the last couple of months I have been working through the list of teams and extracting photographs from their website or social media site so that the kit of the vast majority of sides will be on display. I have recently been given a collection of photos of defunct sides (mostly, but not exclusively Ring) and I'm looking to extend the listing of sides to include as many former teams as possible. Any information in this respect will be welcome!.

In the coming months there are plans to modify the main dance page to make it clearer for non-morris-savvy users to appreciate the different styles of morris and traditional dances listed. In addition it is hoped to introduce a facility in which a side can register its involvement in associated folk customs such as mumming, wassailing, rush-cart, hobby horse, etc. There is already a links page on the website but I am looking at the possibility of including a bibliography of morris relevant books.

The Morris Dance Database has come a long way since the germ of an idea over 5 years ago but there is still work to be done, and I envisage it as an on-going dynamic resource of all things Morris. I would ask everyone to spread the word, encourage participation from all sides that you know, and suggest that a link to the database is featured on their website. I would also like to thank the Morris Ring for their sponsorship of the project, and hope that the sponsorship can be renewed again for the coming year. The sponsorship covers the cost of web hosting and domain renewal, miscellaneous expenses (usually small) and a retainer for Anahata for the considerable amount of work he undertakes on the website. It would hardly begin to cover the commercial hourly fees if a web designer were employed !

Colin Andrews

(Since drafting this report in mid-January there have been further additions of dances and an increase in the number of sides with some of their repertoire listed.)



f) Webmaster and publications

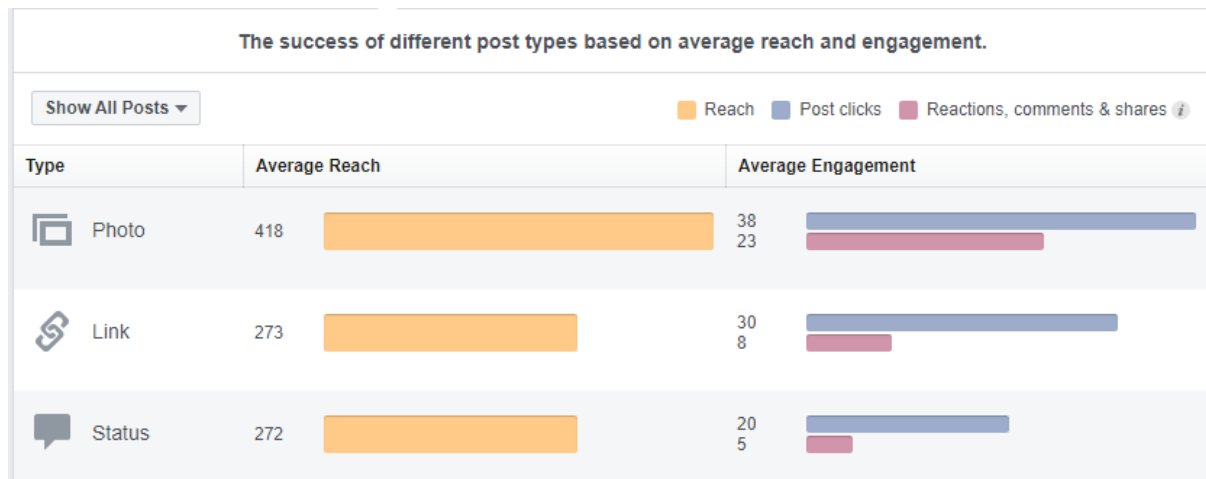
Not surprisingly a rather different year for our web site's on-line activity and readership.

It goes without saying that many of the postings and visits were regarding cancellations, COVID performance advice and, inevitably, the "black make-up" debate. Visitors were however still clicking in significant numbers on our publications pages (6505 in the last 12 months) the music library (5342) and "find-a-side" (3414). Not so many visited events pages!

We hope we were able to lighten the mood with the addition of a new page featuring [30+ Morris Ring Film archives](#) for which we had copyright permissions and I was able to upload YouTube. Similarly we now have the first volume of [The Morris Dancer](#) fully digitised online, thanks to the scanning efforts of Matt Simons. More to follow – and we have another project in hand to digitise "missing" digital copies of the Circular. That may take some time! [The Links page](#) was also revamped and as well as dead links being updated or removed, there's now Facebook morris related groups section with links to help while away lockdown.

The web news subscription service continues to add new users. You can subscribe to receive links to Morris Ring news items and important updates direct to your email in box using our MailChimp [subscription form](#). I promise not to inundate you – in fact given the lack of activity this year the mail-outs were reduced to about once a month. You may unsubscribe from the service at any time. Your details will not be shared with any third party and will be deleted should you unsubscribe.

Our Facebook page also saw a downturn in activity with few events to report on and sadly, sprinkled with obituaries. Despite that we added 120 “Likes” and we now have 1320 fans registered and 1520 “followers”. Let’s hope we can get back to Events and “fun stuff” before this year is out!



Peter de Courcy

g) Overseas Bagman

Nigel has submitted a combined report for Overseas and his Area. Please see item 6(g) below.

5. Election: Bagman of the Morris Ring

One candidate has been nominated for the post, Peter Austin of Jockey Men’s Morris (inter alia).

Personal Statement for post of Bagman of the Morris Ring

Peter Austin – Jockey Men’s Morris



As a relative newcomer (only 5 years dancing), I have found a wonderful new world within the morris. In that short time, I've had a very steep learning curve but nevertheless an enjoyable one, joining 7 sides and picking up a variety of traditions along the way. I became West Midlands area rep for the Morris Ring in 2020, taking over from Mark Carter. Among my more recent memorable activities were travelling to Australia in 2018 for a two week tour as a guest of the Australian Morris Ring, helping to organise the Warwickshire Ring Meeting in 2019 and helping to revive the One Day Wonders Travelling Morris in the same year.

Morris is facing several challenges as we enter the third decade of the 21st Century. Chief among them is understanding how we can operate in a world which is still grappling with Coronavirus, which has impacted all of our activities both in and out of morris. There has been some outstanding work done by the Officers of both the Ring and the JMO in the last year to keep abreast of developments as the pandemic has developed, and I hope to carry this forward as the situation continues to change.

That aside, I would like to continue efforts to identify and develop potential recruitment strategies as this issue is still very much to the fore of many sides. To this end we must, as part of the JMO, help to keep the public perception of morris positive and that means monitoring changes in social attitudes and being willing to adapt to new situations. This is critical to ensuring the future of both the Ring specifically and the morris in general.

Supporting statement of nomination:

Leicester Morrismen

Squire: Joe Krych Bagman: Charlie Corcoran mail: bagman@leicestermorrismen.co.uk

14 January 2021

Nomination of Peter Austin for Bagman of the Morris Ring

By his own admission Peter, better known by many as Cheesy, is a relative newcomer to Morris but in that time he has impressed with his enthusiasm and growing skill. Leicester first encountered him as a member of Jockey but although not recently (!) rather like a chameleon, we have met him in various kits. However dressed, Pete is always friendly and cheerful, and a real team player whose passion and enjoyment of the Morris is clear for all to see. As assistant Squire of Jockey and Squire and the driving force behind Knightlow Morris, and for the past year West Midlands Area Rep for the MR, Pete has proved that he has the life experience, organisational abilities and diplomatic skills to fulfil the role Bagman of the Morris Ring. He recognises the profound challenges the Morris world faces in these unpredictable and unprecedented times. He understands the unique traditions and experience that the Morris Ring has to offer as we continue to work cooperatively with our fellow Morris organisations. Following Jon will not be easy but we are confident that Pete will bring youth, courage and enthusiasm to the role and we urge clubs to support his candidature.

Charlie Corcoran Bagman Leicester Morrismen (submitted on headed paper, redacted for GDPR)

Area Representatives (year of re-election in brackets)

East Midlands, Charlie Corcoran (2021)

South Midlands, Roger Comley (2021)

Northern, Jono Millward (2021)

North West, David Loughlin (2023)

North East, Brian Pollard (2022)

West Midlands, Peter Austin (2023)

Eastern, Nigel Strudwick (2022)

South Wales and West, Paul Reece (2023)

South East, Fred Hands (2021)

6. Area Representatives' reports

a) East Midlands, Charlie Corcoran

Aldbury Morris Men

The most co-ordinated activity we have mounted in lockdown was Mayday, when we filmed

ourselves dancing out as individuals. One of our members who, by virtue of having both an “I” and a “T” in his name, was deemed to be technically equipped to sprinkle magic dust upon the outcome to produce ...

Aldbury Morris May Day 2020 part 1 - <https://youtu.be/mGw2w38Fwsg>

Aldbury Morris May Day 2020 part 2 - <https://youtu.be/n1pBcrUqSIU>

Since then during the summer and autumn months, as social distancing regulations permitted, occasionally groups of up to six met in gardens for music sessions or walks. Most of us have attempted to keep fit enough to be capable of movement by walking , cycling, or Leisure Centre based fitness classes. Changes in regs. and the weather have taken their toll on this. Our Squire has contact with a couple of Fitness Coaches with whom he is exploring the potential for routines to re-establish aerobic readiness and flexibility to our mainly 60s to mid 70 year old frames so that our (possibly) legendary levels of performance can be re-established. The results could well be jaw-dropping, be this by audience response or by the side fighting for breath.



Meanwhile, our group cohesion takes the form of weekly Zoom meetings, descriptive adjectives mainly commencing with B.

Despite the grinning, we are seriously concerned about our dancing future.

Best wishes for a future with Bells on.

John Farthing

Anker Morris Men

As expected, a minimal amount to report. Following Devil's Dyke's Ale and the ARM in March, things effectively shut down, pub nights couldn't happen and regular bookings were cancelled. We held one socially distanced practice on 18th March, and then decided that it was wiser to stop meeting.

We haven't danced except for a couple doing jigs on VE Day and a couple of us taking parts in jigs competitions. (Toby won the Whitby competition, Jon and Em came third in the John Gasson double jigs competition for Sidmouth).

We managed one actual meet up in the practice hall in September and a couple of actual, distanced meets in the pub but apart from that we have met for a Skype meeting every Wednesday where much is discussed but not much about Morris, except when it looks as if the guidelines might change or there is an issue of wider interest, like blacking-up. Otherwise we wait and see like just about everyone else.

Here's hoping some of 2021 can be rescued.

Joe Oldaker

Anstey Morris Men

No information available

Bedford Morris Men

As expected not much to report but we are anxiously waiting for the green light to at least starting practice again. Anticipating that we may (probably) have to wait until the Spring and find an outside area where we can social distance and get some stepping practice underway, especially for newer men.

We have a regular Wednesday evening meet by zoom and that's well supported. Much like an apres Morris session in the pub, if you stretch your imagination a lot !

We met on Plough Monday, again via zoom for a read through of the Plough Play. 13 men were present plus some ladies in the virtual audience. I think its the first time in living memory that the Bedford Morris Men have not performed the Plough Play in public. It was a dreadful rendition but we decided that in normal circumstances we would have had the benefit of at least a couple of ales to help us on our way !

To conclude we are confident that the Bedford Morris Men will be back in action as soon as circumstances allow.

Phil Cooper

Brackley Morris Men

In spite of the odds being against us, the Brackley Morris Men have successfully navigated the shifting rules, and have been able to achieve a fairly productive year.

In January we took part in The Somerton Wassail, an annual outing for us. The donation of £80

was to be our only income for the year as by March the world had come to a grinding halt.

From March to June we met weekly by zoom and our foreman taught us jigs. Those who had space joined in as best they could. We also played tracks from our 2013 CD, and did 'show & tells', sharing photos, records and memories from our history. On 23rd April we performed our mumming play. Some of the men marked our cancelled events for May Day, VE day and Summer Solstice by filming themselves dancing in kit and posting on Facebook.

In July the rules relaxed a little and we held weekly open-air jig practices in the large field behind one of our local supportive pubs.

Over the August bank holiday weekend we were able to go out on our usual 'Summer Tour', two days of dance around Brackley and local villages. We created a risk assessment based on the Government guidelines for 'performing arts' which included appropriate safety measures: all to wear face masks; one stick per man for the duration of the weekend; regular use of hand sanitiser; no figures involving contact (e.g. hands around); no car sharing; no communal meals; no prior publicity to minimise audience; strict adherence to the rules in place at our dance locations (e.g. pub gardens or car parks). Our fool used a long stick with black and yellow stripes to remind us and our audience, in a humorous but effective way, of the need for distancing.

In September and October the Council once again opened up its premises for hire, so we were able to resume indoor practice. We were required to sign the Council risk assessment, and to add to it our own list of safety measures, similar to the ones used for our summer tour.

Then in November the latest rules prevented indoor practice, so we continued with monthly zoom meetings. In November we celebrated our annual 'Ale' by zoom, by coming in kit, dancing jigs and drinking beer. In December we had a similar zoom session to celebrate the 61st anniversary of our reformation in 1959.

Our December AGM was conducted by e-mail in a three stage process with weekly gaps for input from members: a) issuance of agenda; b) issuance of officers reports and AOB; c) issuance of final minutes.

We achieved a limited outing on Boxing Day, using a risk assessment similar to the one used for our Summer Tour. 5 men living in Northamptonshire were able to take part to mark the occasion, but those of us in Buckingham and Oxfordshire were grounded under Tier 4 lockdown rules.

Now of course we're once again in full lockdown, so it's back to 'zoom', but whenever the time is right, we'll be ready to rock and roll!

Ferneyhough

Stephen

Dolphin Morris Men

Dolphin Morris held its last practise on March 12th, stopping the week before the Lockdown was announced in deference to the emerging situation and because the vast majority of the membership was of a certain (potentially vulnerable) age.

There has been no great enthusiasm within Dolphin to meet over Zoom or similar. There have been several moves to share recordings of tunes and song but these never really took off as a group activity.

A group email address of all members was established as was a What's App group which allowed the sharing of banter and jokes/ video clips of varying quality.

However we had a social gathering one afternoon in August held in a member's garden. Reading and complying with the regulations applying at the time to produce a "Covid Secure" environment allowed some 14 of us to gather, chat, have a laugh, drink our own beer, and play a few tunes.

Given that we knew commercial exercise and dance classes were taking place in village halls, thought was given to see if we could hold a practice session. Rather than change dances it was decided to risk assess our dance repertoire to identify those which would comply, with the 2 metre rule. The published and evolving government guidance and advice was studied to identify what was allowed, and required to provide a "Covid Secure" environment. To cut a long story short, a practise was arranged for 15th October. It might not have been like any practise we were used to, but unfortunately it was not to be. The whole Nottinghamshire was put into Tier 3 on the 14th October, which did not allow any such meetings.

We hope to use this experience, and the advice and guidance given by Sally Wearing on the Fed website to organise a practise/meeting as soon as circumstances allow.

First Class Stamp

First class stamp are meeting (virtually) and dancing every week. We have various family units within the team so they can dance together at home, Jon plays and everyone else mutes so that all can hear him. We have actually gained a couple of dancers / musicians because they can join us virtually from a distance when they couldn't come in person to the practise venue if we were practising properly. We have managed to do this all year. We are quite pleased with this. In September when things loosened up a little we managed one actual meet up.
Emma Melville

Foresters Morris & Sword Dance Club

In the whole of the year 2020 our only outdoor performance was our Plough Play in January.

Since the onset of the virus restrictions our practices have ceased and we have replaced them with weekly Zoom meetings. These have been a good opportunity to keep in touch and talk about those vital topics that would previously have been discussed in the bar after practice - gardening, cooking, ageing sicknesses, and more recently internet connectivity, lockdown and home sheared hairstyles.

Many of us are old enough to have already had our first vaccines. The side looks forward to practising, dancing out and visiting pubs as soon as it is legal to do so.
Eric Foxley

Hinckley Bullockers

No information available

Knightlow Morris

As you'd expect, Knightlow have largely been inactive this year. We've kept in touch electronically where possible but besides that we have not practiced since February 2020.

We were represented on May Bank Holiday when our Squire and Foreman performed a jig in our home village of Ryton on Dunsmore, greatly received by local bystanders observing from their doorsteps.

We also had several members participating in the John Gasson memorial jigs competition in early August, but sadly no prizes were won this time.

We eagerly await to see what 2021 will bring and hope that we can at least start practicing once vaccinations have been dished out.
Austin
Pete 'Cheesy'

Leicester Morris Men

Leicester are in an almost unique position because the city of Leicester and some of its surrounding county suburbs has been in lock-down since 23rd March 2020. When the rest of the country were at least partially released in June we remained restricted., I cannot even retrieve out stick bags from our practice hall! This has meant that the only contact that Leicester Morris have been able to achieve is through Zoom.

We used Facebook and our website to publicise a virtual version of the Sproxton Wooing Play, the play collected by Leicester Morris in the 1950s that we perform every Boxing Day at The Griffin Inn, Swithland. Through this, using JustGiving, we were able to continue our tradition of collecting money for Rainbows, our local Children's Hospice, raising £400.

Our last public appearance in our winter guise of Red Leicester at Whittlesey Straw Bear 2020 and we were very proud that we made several appearances during the excellent virtual presentations for Whittlesey Straw Bear 2021.

A couple of weeks after our Feast in February we performed at Leicester's CAMRA Beer Festival but the last opportunity for an evening dance and meal before the lockdown was New St George and Ladybay Reveller's The Insomniacs Ball, which was attended by three of our chaps.

To mark May Day most of the side danced Fieldtown The Nutting Girl outside their homes at 7.00am to coordinated (well, as closely as varying internet speeds would allow) with one of our musicians and drank a toast. A couple of the side who are near neighbours performed some jigs in their street in Cosby to mark VE Day and later to celebrate Mid-Summer, to the delight of their neighbours.

We are trying to maintain contact within the side using Zoom to meet up for weekly socially distanced attempts at solo practice followed by chewing the fat over a pint. Unfortunately some of our members are not IT savvy and our three recent recruits (well, Autumn 2019) have largely dropped out but we have to remain positive and hope that when we are able to resume real practices all will re-join. Along with everyone else we hope to be able to achieve at least some public performances at local pubs this year – if any survive.
Charlie Corcoran

Lincoln & Micklebarrow Morris Men

Unfortunately, like several other sides L&MMM, have put themselves into storage awaiting an upturn in the present situation. We were meeting in a room at the back of a pub, but obviously, that was put on hold due to the visiting of pubs & the mixing of more than 6 individuals from different households. We did hold our AGM via Zoom & have been having a monthly Zoom get together to keep in touch with each other. We have not done any virtual dancing.

Fortunately, we have all steered clear of the virus, I did have to isolate due to coming into contact with someone who had got the virus, but fortunately, I did not have any symptoms.

Our last dance out was when we attended Ripley feast at the end of January 2020, we had to cancel all of our summer jigs, including visiting Lincoln's twin town of Neustadt in Germany, it would have been the 50th anniversary of the twinning between the 2 towns & Lincoln Morris Men were one of the first organisations to be involved in the twinning.

Sorry there is not much to report, but here's hoping we can resume practice soon, even if it is just to get some exercise into the our bodies. Like everyone else we are currently not taking any bookings until things take a turn for the better, hoping the vaccine is effective.
Andy Horn

Moulton Morris Men

Like everyone else it will be short! We had our last practice in March . The 2020 Moulton Festival and Maycart were cancelled, as were all our other public bookings and group activities. Our musicians put together a "massed tune" and our dancers one "bubble group" jig video for the Village Festival webpages and it was good to see the level of local support , with local people displaying "scarecrow morris men" outside their locked down houses during festival week.

The side have kept in touch using Zoom and we hope to return to dancing activities as soon as things allow us to, sometime in 2021. Our membership is little changed- we have 18 "reasonably available" dancers and 6 musicians, with a few occasional extras.
Nick Ellison

Northampton Morris Men

Like a lot of sides we have been inactive since March 2020. We met in Nov to discuss a way forwards and planned to begin practice in January. As the situation worsened we realised that would not be possible.

WE are waiting for the situation to ease before live practice resumes but until then we are inactive.

However, Two members have performed solo jigs at various times. One member works in a care home and performs for his residents. Paul Melhuish.

Packington Morris Men

Packington, as stated in previous years, are small in number and can be considered an 'occasional team' at best. The pandemic meant that they were unable to partake of their regular Boxing Day and May Day commitments and there have been no regular meet-ups either in person or via the internet. It is understood that all members with an interest in regular performance or practice, have joined other sides and will have been partaking of whatever arrangement they had in place" Phil Quelch

Ripley Morris Men

The news from Ripley Morris is that we survive and continue to thrive through weekly Zoom meetings which have served to keep many of our members in touch with each other. Through the good offices of our Squire Alex Bowness, each session has been topically themed and members have contributed songs, tunes, poems and recitations around the theme.

Ripley Morris have not danced out as a side this year though a video of us dancing a virtual Bonnie Green Garters was posted on our Facebook page on May Day and was much appreciated by our many fans.

Individual members danced out to neighbours on 8th May and some of these also found their way on to our Facebook page.

The really good news is that on October 22nd a small but perfectly formed group of Ripley Morris dancers and musicians held a socially distanced practice session in Fritchley Church Hall. It is assumed that news of this event reached the ears of the government because immediately afterwards we were plunged into Tier 3 and any future meeting plans were

scuppered.

On Boxing Day the tradition of appearing on Ripley Market Place at 11.00am was upheld by three gallant members. The Fool announced the lack of dancing and Denise, one of our musicians played the traditional opening dance - Laudnum Bunches from Headington - ably supported by her husband John. Four men and their four dogs observed this event.

The AGM for 2020 was cancelled as was the annual Ale Feast scheduled for 30th January. We look forward to receiving the vaccine and returning to normal service before 2022. Mick Buckley

Rose & Castle Morris Men

We have not danced out at all since New Year's Day 2020. The first date would have been the JMO Day of Dance in Liverpool in April. The most significant cancellation being our trip with Queen's Oak to Marburg in Germany which would have taken place at the end of May. We started planning for this 2 years ago. It certainly won't happen this year either but if the plans are still in place maybe the year after. Many of us lost money as a result of this.

During the early days of lockdown we did nothing but at the point where the restrictions allowed a number of members met in the Boat Inn to chat and play music socially distanced. As restrictions were again tightened that came to an end and eventually towards the autumn we started thinking about using Zoom to do some long-distance practice followed by a social chat over a pint. Not the easiest thing to set up (as some members are technologically challenged) nor trying to dance on your own. But it keeps us active and together as a group as well as reminding ourselves of the dances.

We are hoping that when it becomes possible we will resume practice for real and may be do some local dance outs at pub this year until we have fully got back into things. Then later doing more public events.
Ian Welborn

Towersey Morris

Towersey Morris has, like other sides, had a quiet year. This was partly due to Covid19 – but also injuries had some impact!

We danced at a social distance outside our local pub on what would have been the end of our

season on about 1st August with members of our sister side, The Three Horseshoes.

We did hold our AGM and discussed how we will move forward with ageing members and dwindling numbers. We are optimistic that closer partnership with the Three Horseshoes Morris will provide a good and positive future!

Some members of the side produced the annual political satire that is our Mummers Play – again, socially distanced and then uploaded onto You Tube – link here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvTIZW5XUPE&feature=youtu.be>

We met on Boxing day on Zoom to raise a glass or two when we would have been Mumming and dancing. Here's hoping for a better 2021! Bill Moore Squire

The Witchmen

No information available

b) South Midlands, Roger Comley

The South Midlands Area has been able to keep connected by the wonder of sides who have some members willing and able to use this stuff, we thank them. Many virtual events have been good fun with music dance and comrades doing fine things. May it continue when we get together again. It has been a sad time for some who have lost dear friends and family, and we all share in their grief, and remember the good times too. WASSAIL ROGER, FOOL THE SQUIRE.

c) Northern, Jono Millward

No report available.

d) North West, David Loughlin

Well to say "It's been an awful year for dancing is unbelievable". Starting with the reschedule of the JMO Day of Dance in Liverpool after discussions at the ARM with Officers of the Morris Ring, The Federation and the Open at the Area Rep's meeting. So at the moment for this year it has been moved to Saturday 17th April 2021. Let's just leave it at that at the moment.

Congratulation for those sides who have tried to keep some of their annual traditions going, it's just been a very frustrating year and we are not over it yet. Here's hoping all the teams and sides can carry on as soon as possible this year.

Once again my thanks for the input by all Bagmen and Squires in my Area.

Mersey Morris Men

Unlike the last report of 2019 when they said “we’d had a good year as always” 2020 has spoilt that and which they hope that they will never be able to report that again. 2020 wasn’t a bad year it was just a very quiet one. They had their, by now, traditional New Year’s dance at the Plasterers Arms, Hoylake, followed by the Molly and Border Tour of Chester at the end of February – damp but they found places to dance. Then COVID: May Day was celebrated by four separate jig dancers plus musicians in four different locations. They did managed one practice within COVID rules in September before Lockdown II. Zoom meetings for music; jigs and dancing have been their regular “Monday nights” The Traditional Mersey dancing in Willaston on Boxing Day took place. Three groups of four dancers plus musician danced unannounced and away from the Village Green. They were well received but no cake or mulled wine. Will Lockdown IV s now curtailed 2021. There are 29 members and let’s hope they remember the dances when they restart.

North British Sword Dancers

North British Sword Dancers are doing all right considering the circumstances. They keep in touch via occasional video calls plus email and WhatsApp and are making plans for this year on the basis that it's better to cancel if obliged to than to reach a point where dancing is permitted only to find themselves unprepared. With the full intention to be out as soon as they are allowed.

Southport Swords

They locked down before Mr. Johnson made it official, as the nature of their dances made avoiding close contact impossible. So they have not danced out since last February and have no plans at the moment. They did had a couple of distanced meet ups when things relaxed in August but no dancing. Fingers crossed (and everything else) for April.

Royal Preston Morris Dancers

They haven’t seen their members since March last year, although a few of the Musicians have during the late July and August window tried a couple of Socially Distanced Music Sessions. Although the majority of the members are based around Preston, Chorley and Leyland, they do have members stretching from Lytham-St. Annes, Garstang, Southport and a number in the Ribble Valley. They have relied on Zoom Meetings, initially one per week on a Wednesday Night, but since Mid-Summer it was reduced to once per fortnight.

They did however during the Summer-Time produce an on-line video of the Team dancing at home individually-in the House, Conservatory, and Kitchen, on the Patio and in the Garden and coupled this with the Music. This was well received and sent to the organizers of events that they couldn’t do!-the first one being sent to Ripon City Morris Dancers on the Day of their Tour of the City.

As regards bookings which all have been cancelled or re-scheduled for this Year, some of which being long standing Events. Their last booking that they were able to do was in December 2019 at the Whalley, near Clitheroe, Christmas Pickwick Event.

Tragically at the last practice night, one of their long standing members Neil Graham left the Pub and complaining of a persistent cough. A few days later and a couple of Hospital visits led to a Scan which diagnosed advanced Lung Cancer. Neil sadly died on April the 7th. His funeral was attended by 7 people, obviously COVID restricted-due to Neil's popularity among the Morris; he was also a Bell Ringer, Ceilidh Band Caller and had a stellar Teaching Career. Ironically he hadn't missed a Booking or a Practice.

Wrigley Head Morris Men

Nothing much report from Wrigley Head - they had one comical zoom meeting and haven't done any more. Many of their members are in the most vulnerable bracket and the idea for social meet in the autumn was only taking shape before the rules changed again.

Good news is most of the members will have had the jab and could circulate freely very soon. But we hope to be at Liverpool JMO if it happens otherwise it could be Saddleworth.

Chapel-en-le-Frith Morris

As you anticipated, they have nothing much to report. They did get out once last January (2020) before the first lockdown. This was an afternoon at New Mills Primary School taking the junior classes for a demonstration and teach-in. It was thoroughly enjoyed by the children and by the dancers. Sadly all the other outings - bookings and evenings at local pubs on summer Monday evenings were wiped out. All of the practice evenings and summer dance-outs were replaced by Zoom sessions where they regularly get 10-14 participants. Similarly, the sides Christmas Dinner was called off. All are hoping for better things later this year!

Kinnerton Morris Men

Kinnerton Morris Men have not danced since March 2020. However they have maintained a very close contact with all of their members through weekly Zoom meetings where all but one member (who hasn't got a computer) maintain firm regular contact and is kept in the loop by regular phone calls. Zoom has certainly maintained their group identity. In addition when things eased in the summer a series of bowls matches were organized, few walks and for the most energetic ones bike rides. They are very strong to point out that strict COVID guidance and safety protocols were followed throughout.

At the moment they do not anticipate dancing again till June or July at the earliest. As the completion of the second vaccination programme will need to be achieved to be within their age group

John O'Gaunt Morris and Sword

The last dancing remnants of John O'Gaunt Morris Men in Lancaster, are now known as John O'Gaunt Morris and Sword they have not met since before lockdown last spring. They were developing their rapper dancing, and this is not at all practical on zoom or in a socially distanced manner. Whether they will dance again is debate able due to advancing years and declining fitness, and the tendency of retired people to go off on long holidays. When they have all had their vaccinations and come out of the present lock down they will meet up and discuss the dancing future of the side.

Chester City Morris Men

Their traditional St George's day event which was planned to start the 2020 season was cancelled once the seriousness of the pandemic became evident. A regular Zoom meeting has replaced normal practice nights which allows the team to keep in touch with each other but does not do much to improve the team's dancing technique.

The only 'outing' in 2020 was a video performance for an online Chester Folk Festival which was a lot of fun to create but hard work for the team's video editor to bring it all together.

Thankfully the team remains in good health and they fully intend to pick up where they left off once regulations permit. Unfortunately, St George's Day 2021 now looks very doubtful and Chester Folk Festival will be mainly online again this year.

Leyland Morris Men

Needless to say it has been a very lean year for team; they managed to dance out just once early in 2020 before COVID Virus put the lid on everything. Being the age group that they are they took to their homes, put their clogs and sticks (suitably sanitized) in the store cupboard and are now collecting their certificates.

2020 was a mix of ailments and operations for the team members but they are hopeful of resumption later this year of 2021~ they already have their first booking.

Manchester Morris Dancers

Obviously like everyone else they have not much to report this year, they had a few practices in the autumn. As their practice hall became a COVID secure location they were adapting their dances to maintain distance, while wearing face-masks (then rushing outside to strip them off and get some air).

They have been having weekly 'Zoom' meetings in lieu of post practice pub visits, during which someone usually gives a song or two. Pleasing to report that they are all well, if missing the company and exercise.

Mossley Morris Men

Mossley Morris Men have had a negative year and their only contact has been via messenger. Sadly one Member lost his wife just before Christmas, Joyce followed them everywhere when they were out dancing she shall be missed by all. They have nothing in their calendar for this year just yet and are focusing their practice for the Saddleworth Rush Cart at the end of August.

Thelwall Morris

Lockdown No.1 happened before they had time to get out on their traditional first outing on Easter Monday. This prompted a Zoom meeting on that very day instead of the time They would have been at our “home” pub – The Pickering Arms in Thelwall. One of the lads had his “daily exercise” bike ride to the pub (with portable accordion), so he joined them on Zoom and finished the session with Bonny Green Garters.

During the relaxation of restrictions, six of them were able to meet up in gardens and car parks until it got dark early. By then the village hall was declared COVID-19 safe, so six were able to turn up to practice dancing 3-man dances with suitably distanced markings on the floor. With a bit of a repertoire available including Jigs they went out on August Bank Holiday Monday for their annual walking tour of Thelwall. This went down well with the residents who stood at their gate posts and doorways to watch. Also in August 4 dancers and two musicians attended Lymm Rushbearing this was massively reduced due to the virus. All that stopped, with no dancing taking place since.

Saddleworth Morris Men

As with most sides Saddleworth made no performances last year, the first lockdown starting just before their traditional first outing at Easter. As I'm sure you are aware Rushcart was cancelled much to the disappointment of the side and they imagine the invited sides. They don't imagine we'll be out at Easter again given the current COVID climate but as Rushcart does fall late in the season they are hoping this year can go ahead and are delaying any decisions until absolutely necessary. They are insured so that's a good start!

Otherwise, the lads have been in regular contact with each other. They have had a couple of Zoom sessions including an online Christmas do and a quiz night with their good friends from Earlsdon Morris Men. The AGM was cancelled and all officers agreed to carry on their current roles which was accepted and agreed by the side.

Adlington

Morris

Men

They did not manage to dance out in 2020 before lockdown1 stopped play. Plans were in place for the Liverpool JMO and they thought at the time, that it all might have been over by then. Little did they know?

So the team has taken to meeting on a weekly basis on Zoom on their usual practice day and time. What's been nice is that some ex-members have joined the call so reconnections have been made. When they are eventually allowed out, and dancing can recommence, everyone hopes that they have not lost any members and maybe even gain a few...? Maybe, just maybe...

Horwich Prize Medal Morris

ARM Minutes

6 March 2021

Horwich Prize Medal Morris Men have had as an uneventful year; just as every other morris team. There's been a little online socializing; however, a special mention needs to go to Daniel Threadgold for his persistence in arranging online social catch-ups. At the moment the outlook is gloomy, and they hope that they can recruit and re-engage with dancers when all this is over in 2021.

Bury Pace-Eggers

As for the Pace-Eggers, they didn't go out last year, and we they are not planning their normal pre-Easter tour in March. There is a possibility of doing something at Prestwich Clough Day in mid-May, if it takes place, followed by a late evening tour of some of their favored pubs, but this is all up in the air at present. They are short of numbers so there are discussing having female members of the team. Up to now, they have always blacked up, even the black members of the team. They have never had any problems with this, but in the light of recent developments, understandingly reviewing this policy. As is the case Pace-Eggers in Lancashire generally blacked their faces, but the narrative of the play that they perform only refers to the Turkish Knight character as having a black face. It's likely that, in future, the Turkish Night will just have a couple of smudges on his cheeks.

e) North East, Brian Pollard

No report available.

f) West Midlands, Peter Austin

Like my fellow area Reps, I have not seen anywhere near as many people physically as I would like in this past year. It has been a year of video calls, emails and social media to keep me occupied. I was fortunate to be able to do Jockey's Plough tour and attend a few feasts in the opening months of 2020 before we were rather overtaken by global events...

I have instigated a quarterly newsletter which appears to be well received by the area sides and has been a good means of touching base, especially in the current circumstances.

I would like to advise at this time that I will be standing in the election for Bagman of Morris Ring, and if successfully elected, a replacement representative will need to be chosen by the West Midlands teams.

1st Sedgley Morris Men

On behalf of 1st Sedgley Morris Men. We are still in existence but have not met in person for many months. In common with most sides we suspended practices in March last year but, unlike some, have not attempted to try any of the "socially distanced" suggestions that have circulated from time to time.

We held an AGM a few weeks ago via "zoom" - there was not a great deal to discuss but we were unanimous in our agreement that we would continue to practice and perform publicly as soon as conditions allow.

We have not had any current member of the side [20 men] test positive for Covid-19. We lost a past Squire 1994-96, Dave Hartley to the virus - he died on the 6th April, Dave had not been an active member of the side for some years. Also Sean Murphy/Myers who had been a musician with us many years ago died on the 9th April - he played for us when we danced in at the Moulton Ring Meeting in 1983.

We keep in touch via WhatsApp and Zoom and did meet up once or twice for a pint or two back in the summer - but only 6 at a time! 2020 will go down in our history as the 1st time since 1981 that we did not dance at dawn on May 1st and the year when we only managed to dance "out" 3 times - The Jockey Plough Tour and twice at Almshouses all in Jan and Feb.

Our annual donation to 1st Sedgley Scouts was very generously declined by them because of the circumstances - we make it in return for the use of the Scout Hall where we practice. We therefore made donations to the Black Country Food Bank and to the Sandwell Hospital Cardiac Rehabilitation Unit.

We hope to start up again once the circumstances change but who knows when that will be!

Coventry Morris Men

As far as Coventry MM are concerned:

- we danced at a wedding before any lockdown, a mix of French, Canadian and Chinese people in the audience;
- during the first lockdown, which included the Spring Bank Holiday, we covered most of the spots on our usual "Whit Tour" by using a travelling musician meeting up with one dancer at each venue and dancing a small number of jigs;
- when the relaxation to the "rule of 6" arrived we danced out to a limited extent on our usual Tuesday evenings and one Saturday booking with up to 5 dancers plus our musician dancing 4 man versions of our usual Cotswold dances plus jigs again;
- on Boxing Day we danced in Kenilworth Castle at an event organised by the Town Council and English Heritage dancing mainly 4 man Border style dances plus a couple of jigs within a secure area and with audience numbers limited and distanced.

All of these events were within the current rules/guidelines and were generally welcomed by audiences. It shows what you can do when you put your mind to it.

Faithful City Morris Men

Well what can Faithful City report in a year such as this? It runs to this motley collection of facts.

Our foreman, Phil Hemming, and his good lady wife celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

One of our dancers and current fool, Richard Hannah, celebrated his first year of marriage to Jo in the same year he celebrated the birth of his 3rd grandchild. Ned the horse was not present at the birth or so we believe!

Tim Kelsey, our Squire, notes that the number of mistakes made while dancing out has drastically reduced, it would have been zero mistakes if we hadn't managed a dance out at The Fox in August.

As this is my first year as bagman it appears that I have been freewheeling in terms of the effort I have needed to apply to organising dance outs, but, it has been sadly replaced with reading virus guidance and reviewing risk assessments to see if we can safely perform.

I think the most important fact is, at time of writing, we are all present and correct (and vertical!) we will no doubt be rusty and creaky when we do dance again but we will return to Morris and Rapper when circumstances permit. Until then we will follow the guidance, keep track of those who have been jabbed and, like Arnold Schwarzenegger in "Terminator"... "We will be back!"

Earlsdon Morris

Earlsdon danced twice in 2020; Straw-bear and the Jockey plough, but we did succeed in getting our squire to be squire of the ring. The rest of the year was on-line, including weekly team meetings, socials and games nights with other teams. 2021 marks our 50th year so we are hoping to mark it in some way.

Lassington Oak Morris Men

As you say, not a lot has happened. However, we have been posting mini films to coincide with some of our key events. The first was for May Day, when we actually had two videos to post. The main one was a compilation of the side doing a socially distanced, at home jig. The other was done as a back-up in case it wasn't ready, and involved lego men. The first was very well received, but the latter went crazy!! We ended up with over 70,000 views, a mention in The Times and on Radio four, plus, from comments and shares, it was clear it had gone worldwide too. Might be worth a mention

Shakespeare Morris

I can't think of anything particularly memorable from the Summer, other than dancing outside a closed pub every Monday night was pretty torturous - so close yet so far from beer! Sadly as you'll know we lost Rod Hobbs - scrapbook-binder, dancer, musician, singer and smock-clad fool of Shakespeare Morris.

Here's hoping for a much better 2021 - at least Saddleworth + Bromyard still look possibilities.

Traditional Ilmington Morris Men

The Traditional Ilmington Morris Men have not been active since the end of 2019 - practices are usually held every Wednesday evening and indeed continued until March 2020. We have not entered into the realms of virtual performance as we have felt that the Morris is a special performance for whatever the occasion and as such we are unable to stage ours as it should be presented in public. When it is safe to do so we will return to our usual schedule of traditional dates along with an attempt to renew acquaintances with our local hostelrys and keep the knowledge of the Morris alive.

Our annual instruction to the year 5 class at Ilmington School has also been curtailed and their May ARM Minutes 6 March 2021

celebrations have been interrupted - again we will revive this association as soon as possible. Like many, we will continue to look forward to the time when we can 'resume a normal service'

Stafford Morris

The only thing to report is that Keith Lowson (from Uttoxeter MM) and I met up (by accident) in the Market Place of Uttoxeter on Boxing Day thereby maintaining an unbroken tradition of over 40 years of dancing out that day.

g) Eastern, Nigel Strudwick

Combined report for Overseas Bagman and Eastern Area Rep

This report is going to be somewhat different from usual, rather like the last twelve months! As there are distinct common threads this year for the Morris the world over, with the Bagman's agreement, I have put both reports in one. The following is based entirely on the experiences of sides who replied to my requests for information, even if those sides are mostly not referred to by name—bagmen are thanked for sharing this with me.

Side News (other than virus-related matters)

There has been something of an experiential difference depending on where in the world a side is. Thus sides in North America (Vancouver, Pinewoods) have generally had the same sort of experience that UK sides have, but in Australia, things have been somewhat different: Perth report a regular dance programme limited only by their low numbers, and, with the exception of one "lockdown", Adelaide have been able to practice together. Utrecht also report limited real indoor practicing, but low numbers and the virus have largely prevented Helmond from meeting.

At home, most Eastern sides have very little to report other than a parade of cancelled events (including ones in the first half of this year already), and online meetings, including AGMs. Several sides report being able to dance out once or twice following the guidelines in force at the time, regrettably in at least one case for the funeral of a member, but in another for a Golden Wedding, also of a member. There have been also the "Lone Morris" events where individual dancers have performed. Online dancing events have taken place at varying scales in the UK and in North America. Thameside Mummers have been able to produce a CD of songs they would have sung in the pub on Boxing Day and so far have raised £1,500 for MENCAP (contact Thameside if interested, £5 + p&p). Devil's Dyke managed to make a donation to their current charity, Royal Papworth Hospital, of around £400 with Gift Aid, not by collecting, but by individual men donating money in lieu of sending Christmas cards.

I am aware of the following changes of Bagmen: Colchester (now Robin Taverner), Good Easter (now Daniel Kenning), and Adelaide (now Duncan Ritchie).

Coronavirus matters

Each side has each handled things differently, reflecting a mix of their demographics and local circumstances. With halls and pubs closed for large parts of 2020 no consistent patterns can be seen; rather what has happened in each case reflects, as it should, the wishes of the members of any particular side. Some have exclusively met online, and some have hardly met at all. Online meetings again vary, with some purely social, some with quizzes and music, and others doing as much dancing as is really possible alone in one's living room—allowing for the inevitable technical issues of how to run a dance practice when the music might be in one place and the caller in another! And online Morris meetings are not for everyone, wherever one is in the world, since it can be very dependent on the familiarity with and liking for the technology. Some sides have even managed to practice outdoors a little from July 2020, following the ever-changing guidelines—keeping their distance, doing a lot of jigs and also adapting some hanky dances in the repertoire to maintain those distances. However, this of course fell by the wayside with the onset of winter and more onerous restrictions, including the closing again of pubs; a notable exception was that Rutland were able to come up with a Covid-secure plan for indoor practices in the autumn. One of the few pluses of online meetings is that it has given clubs the chance to meet up with others, and I have been able to attend a few such gatherings (notably with Peterborough and Kemp's), as well as bigger virtual events; my side has also been able to bring our "country members" into practices, as they are usually unable to attend.

The most important thing is keeping sides together and intact and maintaining morale during this extended period of "closure"; this seems to have worked, although of course there are indications that some dancers may well hang up their bells after this enforced break which will impact on some sides' ability to perform when allowed. Obviously, little or no recruitment has taken place—this is likely to lead to problems of course due to the issue of side numbers, but what can anyone do at present?

It is to be regretted that the JMO's entreaties to DCMS, MPs etc seem to have fallen on deaf ears in the hoped-for progress towards clarification of where the Morris stands and what it can do. I hope for better news this year, but of course the pubs will have to open as well...

Face paint matters

Most information I have collected on this is now water under the bridge with the suspension of the proposed consideration of constitutional change at the ARM.

Although Overseas and in the East have only one regular side that uses face paint (Belchamp), there is the January-only Good Easter Molly Gang who also black up in some form, as well as a few sides that do some Border or Molly over the winter. Belchamp have yet to discuss the issue formally as they want to hold this particularly important AGM in person, although I understand that some members have already modified what they propose to put on their faces. However, there is evident change afoot among the others (inevitably not without disagreements I gather, as we all know it generates strong opinions). I get the distinct sense among sides here and abroad that full black face

paint has had its day. Thus I understand, for example, that Thaxted had not planned to invite sides with blackface to their annual meeting last year. I can be sure that there will be no lack of support among “my” sides for an appropriate way of expressing this idea in the constitution or other document.

While it is ancient history now, less popular was the way the matter was handled last summer. Things are clearly heading in the right direction now, but quite a few sides did express concern to me about the messaging coming out from the Ring and JMO when face paint reared its ugly head again last summer, given that the membership had not been involved at that point.

h) South Wales and West, Paul Reece

No report available.

i) South East, Fred Hands

Following 2020 ARM and subsequent lock down due to Covid 19 Morris dancing activity within the South East area has been all but non existent. Thankfully no one has died of Covid from within south East clubs, and although there have been a few cases, all have recovered. The Majority of clubs have managed to keep in touch with members through weekly Zoom meetings which tend to be social contact rather than dancing. A few clubs attempted to have a few practice sessions outside during the early autumn but nothing sustained. Thames Valley managed 5 Weeks. The only events that have taken place have been virtual events, King Johns organized a Zoom Mummers play which they released on You Tube along with a Christmas carol this raised about £1000 for charity. St Nicholas at Wade and Sarre Hoodeners ran their annual Hoodening play in a similar way and also raise about £1000 for charity Ravensbourn ran their Annual boxing day Punch run as a virtual event so that there was no break in the tradition. All clubs are looking forward to being able to meet up again and hoping that they still have sufficient dancers able to dance after a long lay off.

9. Ring Candlesticks

This image refers to an agenda item. Note the Ring logo on the base.



11. Future Events - PROVISIONAL

2021

~~17th April~~ **JMO Day of Dance, Liverpool, POSTPONED TO 2022, date to follow**

19th June **Coventry City of Culture Day of Dance, MAY BE POSTPONED**

24th July **Plymouth Morris Muster Ring Meeting**

As a result of rescheduling this event the accommodation is no longer available, so it has become a one-day event. Plymouth Morris imagine that many sides will want to arrange accommodation themselves and if there are sufficient dancers available on the Sunday, the event can continue on the 25th July.

21st-22nd August **Saddleworth Rushcart Ring Meeting**

25th September **Peterborough Morris Ring Meeting**

A Day of Dance in Peterborough without the Feast originally proposed. There will be no charge for the event.

2022

(date TBA) **Letchworth Centenary Ring Meeting**

