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Newsletter No. 117

ARM Papers February 2020

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A note from the Bagman of the Morris Ring

Please note that changes to side details, officers etc. needs now to be managed via the side's login to the Ring website. Any problems with this, or with other matters relating to membership or subscriptions, please contact the Treasurer of the Morris Ring in the first instance.

Future Events

2020

- 14th March **Annual Representatives' Meeting**
Oak Farm Hotel, Hatherton, Staffs.
- 18th April **JMO Day of Dance, Liverpool, organised by sides from the North West area of the Morris Ring**
We have additional places allocated; 11 signed up and 2 places still available – please let the Ring Bagman know if you wish to attend, before 22nd February.
- 30th – 31st May **Thaxted Morris Weekend**
- 31st July – 2nd August **St Albans Ring Meeting (362)**
Currently 38 applicants (five sides) so there is space still available – please let the Ring Bagman know urgently if you wish to attend (side and projected numbers, please).
- 22nd – 23rd August **Saddleworth Rushcart Ring Meeting (363)**
Please make applications via the Rushcart Secretary as usual.
- 5th – 6th September **Plymouth Morris Mayflower Morris Muster Marine Ring Meeting (364)**
Currently 102 applicants (nine sides) and there is still space available – please let the Ring Bagman know urgently if you wish to attend (side and projected numbers, please).
- 26th September **Peterborough Morris Cathedral City Day Ring Meeting (365)**
This meeting is currently under-subscribed – please let the Ring Bagman know if you wish to attend (side and projected numbers, please).

Morris Ring ARM, Oak Farm Hotel, Hatherton, 14th March 2020

The ARM will be at its now customary location of Oak Farm Hotel, Hatherton (Watling St, Cannock WS11 1SB). Application forms for attending are located at the end of this document. Please be prompt in applying as places for accommodation are limited.

Elections

At the 2020 ARM we shall be electing a new Squire of the Morris Ring; the Treasurer of the Ring has agreed to continue in position and several Area Representatives are due for triennial election/re-election.

Voting in Elections

1. Squire – for full Member sides not attending the ARM, postal votes (including email) stating clearly the preferred candidate for the position, should be sent by the Bagman of the side to the Ring Bagman to arrive not later than midnight on 6th March 2020. Note that any side attending the ARM will have their postal vote removed from the ballot.
2. Area Representatives – by show of hands among the attending Member clubs in the Area Meetings, if required.

Voting on the proposed changes to the Constitution

A Google Group discussion was set up and several email discussions have taken place. Voting will be by show of hands of those Member clubs attending the ARM.

Candidates for Squire of the Morris Ring

1. Simon Newman (Earlsdon Morris)



From Emma Melville, Squire, Anker Morris Men (by email):

Anker Morris Men are delighted to propose Simon Newman of Earlsdon Morris as the next squire of the Morris Ring. We have known Simon through Earlsdon for many years and have been impressed by the high standard of dance and performance he instils in the team. Music, dance and presentation are always of the highest quality and thrill audiences with the dancers showing obvious enjoyment - all testament to Simon's leadership skills.

Simon not only dances and plays well, he is also a superb communicator and his contributions over recent years to the difficult decisions facing the Ring have been incisive and considered comments which go straight to the heart of the issues and demonstrate excellent understanding of the world the Ring needs to move in and adapt to.

Simon's involvement with other side's, including the exceptional Chinewrde Morris, demonstrates his ability to interact and promote unity across the Morris world.

The Ring needs to engage with the wider community and Simon - a young, enthusiastic, first-rate dancer and musician rooted in a Morris family and traditional side - is the ideal person to take Morris to the masses.

Anker are honoured to support him.

From Simon Newman, Squire, Earlsdon Morris (by email):

First, I would like to thank Anker Morris for their nomination to be the next squire of the ring; it is an honour to be considered. Having been a member of Earlsdon Morris since the age of 9, I have held the role of squire for 15 years. Over the years I have danced the length and breadth of the country, meeting many teams and making friends from not just ring teams but with people across the Morris community.

For me, Morris is about sharing experiences and making memories. I am passionate about putting on the best performance we can, by not only concentrating on the standard of dance but also how well we engage an audience. At the heart of the Morris is joy and friendship.

The Ring has undergone many changes in recent years. Though not all will agree, I believe these changes have put the Ring on course to ensure its relevance in the modern Morris scene and I would be honoured to continue to champion these values going forward. The Ring has the richest traditions and a huge range of resources, I believe these are our greatest strengths and should be utilised as much as possible to encourage the next generation of performers. If elected Squire I will be humbled to embody the future of the Morris Ring. The Morris ring has evolved, let us continue to demonstrate it!

Thank You
Simon Newman
Squire Earlsdon Morris

2. Nigel Strudwick, Devil's

Dyke Morris Men



Squire – Rick Titley-Sage
Bagman – Daniel Baker

28th November 2019

To Jon Melville, Bagman, Morris Ring

Dear Jon,

White Rose Morris Men have the pleasure of proposing Nigel Strudwick for the post of Squire of The Morris Ring.

We have known Nigel for the last 30 years as a proactive member of the Morris community. He is well liked and though he is often outspoken he does so with respect for others and mindfulness of their sensibilities.

He has shown excellent leadership qualities in his organisation of Devil's Dyke MM and many of their events and has demonstrated his commitment to the organisational side of the Morris through his activities as Overseas Bagman and Eastern Area Representative to the Advisory Council. Nigel is a professional communicator and has a well considered approach when communicating with officialdom, the Morris community and the general public.

His enthusiasm for the Morris, folk traditions and their promotion is demonstrated by his resurrection of the Whaddon carolling tradition, which in addition to involving the Morris is now well established as an annual social event in the village.

In summary, we believe that the above points qualify Nigel well as candidate for election as Squire of the Morris Ring and we are happy to wholeheartedly support him.

Yours sincerely,

Rick Titley-Sage (Squire) and Daniel Baker (Bagman) on behalf of White Rose Morris Men

From Nigel Strudwick, Devil's Dyke Morris Men, Eastern Area Rep and Overseas Bagman, by email):



In January 1992 I went to Devil's Dyke's first practice of the year and have been with the Side ever since. I've had two stints as Bagman and two as Squire. There I learned the central importance of dancing well and maintaining standards, but also the need to adapt to the Morris Dance world in the 21st century.

I've been Ring Overseas Bagman since 2012 and have tried to maintain contact with Sides far and near. A highlight was dancing with Perth MM in Australia in 2017. I was elected as Eastern Area Rep in 2016, and quickly realised the need to keep all Sides fully informed as the intermediary between the Ring Officers and the clubs, which was particularly important during the changes to the Constitution in 2018.

The last decade has seen many changes in the Ring and we must not only look ahead to continue the good work of those changes, but we must also ensure that the things that make the Ring so special to us are maintained. It is difficult to know what challenges there are to come, although recruitment is a major issue that many clubs are

addressing, but the Ring Officers must ensure that there are strong links between all of our member clubs, and continue to work for all Morris through the JMO. Developing positive lines of communication with the other Morris and folk organisations is more important now than ever.

A proposed change to the Constitution of the Morris Ring

In discussions surrounding the funding of Archive projects or general Arts and Educational projects via Grant applications, it has become clear the Constitution as it stands does not meet certain external criteria. This is not a deficiency in the current Constitution. Merely the fact that an external body such as the National Lottery has certain requirements that we have not had to consider to date.

The central issue is that our Constitution should prohibit personal gain by the Officers and members of the Morris Ring. Also that if the Morris Ring were to be dissolved, that the money would not be distributed to Officers or members. These are fairly obvious requirements to prevent fraud in the use of Grant funds awarded.

In order to allow the Morris Ring to pursue such funding opportunities, 2 additional clauses are suggested to add to the 'General' section of the Constitution.

The Squire and the Officers wish to make clear that the proposed changes will not affect the expenses policy of the Morris Ring. This has expressly excluded personal gain for many years and the proposed changes will not affect or inhibit the work of the Officers in carrying out their duties.

They also wish to place on record that there is no intention to dissolve the Morris Ring. Such an issue is purely a matter for the membership and both the financial position and future of our Organisation is strong.

The proposed clauses are set out below for the information of the member clubs and these will be brought forward for a formal vote at our ARM in March 2020 at the request of the Squire.

NEW PROPOSED CLAUSES

- A. All funds or assets of the Morris Ring shall be used only for the furtherance of its objectives and no such funds or assets shall be transferred to the Officers or member clubs of the Morris Ring for their personal use
- B. On the dissolution of the Morris Ring none of its funds or assets shall be transferred to its Officers or member clubs for their personal use and shall only be transferred to charitable or not-for-profit organisations having the same or similar objectives as the Morris Ring and an equivalent prohibition on personal use of funds or assets once transferred

Proposed: Stafford Morris

Seconded: Peterborough Morris

Legal context: Ed Worrall, Past Squire, Past Treasurer, Chair of the Advisory Council

Call for Contributions

Any items of urgent Morris-related news, please send to me at bagman@themorrisring.org for inclusion in the next Newsletter. Less time-dependent updates and longer pieces to Tony Foard, please, for the Circular.

If you have any photographs, you can send them to Duncan Broomhead, the Morris Ring Photo Archivist (duncan.broomhead@btinternet.com) and any articles, ideally accompanied with photographs, can be submitted to Tony Foard, the Editor of the Morris Ring Circular, details above.

Charlie Corcoran, the Keeper of the Morris Ring Log Book, is keen to receive stories about Ring events, both the formal and the quirky (Charliecorcoran7@ntlworld.com).



ARM Application Form 2020

Name of Side:

Contact Name:

Names of other attendees:

...../.....

Email:

Tel No:

Address:

.....

Postcode:

Friday Night accommodation & Saturday Breakfast	No@ £ 27.50	£
Camper van	No@ £ 15	£
Saturday ARM to Sunday morning including coffee, lunch, tea and Sat night accommodation & Sunday breakfast (U16 –half price)	No@ £ 77.50	£
Saturday Breakfast (for campers/vans & early arrivals)	No@ £ 8.50	£
Saturday ARM - including feast (No accommodation)	No@ £50	£
Saturday ARM* - excluding feast (Morning Coffee / Lunch / Afternoon Tea)	No@ £27.50	£
Feast only	No@ £37.50	£
ARM only - no meals	No.....@ Free	£ 0.00
Sunday Breakfast (for campers/vans)	No@ £ 8.50	£
TOTAL (pay by cheque/BACS) – delete as necessary		£ .

There are 20 twin bedded rooms and 5 double bedded rooms. Book early to get a twin room!

Please specify number of non-alcohol drinkers Please specify how many require vegetarian meals.....

Please indicate if disabled access is required Yes / No

Please fill in this form, (even if only attending the afternoon meeting) and post it or email it.

Cheques made payable to: **Stafford Morris Men (Misdemeanours)**

BACS details are 60-22-09. A/c 64513165. (Put your name/club as reference)

Peter Copley, 5, Woodleighton Grove, Uttoxeter, Staffs., ST14 8BX

drpetercopley@gmail.com

01889 567962 or 07949 309043

Morris Ring Annual Representatives' Meeting, 14th March 2020



Programme for the day

10:00 – 11:00 Arrival and coffee

11:00 – 12:30 Area meetings

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 15:30 ARM

15:30 – 16:00 Tea and coffee

16:00 – 17:00 Border Morris workshop, Leominster Morris

16:00 – Advisory Council meeting

17:00 – 18:30 Informal dancing

19:00 - Feast (in kit)

Informal singing and dancing to follow.

00:30 - Bar closes

Agenda for the ARM 2020

1) Attendees and Apologies

Please will any sides not able to attend let the Bagman of the Ring have their apologies as a matter of urgency, to arrive before midnight on 6th March 2020.

2) Minutes from ARM 2018

Minutes of the 2019 ARM were circulated as an Appendix to Newsletter No 114 in June 2019. Copies will NOT be available for perusal at the Meeting.

Proposer

Secunder

3) Matters Arising from the Minutes

4) Squire's Report – Pete Simpson

Being Squire of the Morris Ring means you get invited to some great events, getting involved with some great dancing and people. For me the highlight of the last 12 months has to be the Warwickshire Ring Meeting. A joint meeting organised by Shakespeare Morris celebrating their 60th anniversary and my own club, Jockey Men's Morris, celebrating their 70th.

You may recall that after the 2018 ARM we reviewed many of the Morris Ring's procedures and traditions to see if they were still relevant. The organisers of the Warwickshire meeting, while running it in a tradition style, happily changed things if they didn't want them, such as dropping the religious elements. The main thing that struck me, though, was the number of women attending. There was certainly nothing token about their presence. First Class Stamp danced in as full members, the first mixed side to do this. Flowers of Ilmington where there, our first all woman's dance side. Belle d'Vain, though not a Ring side, joined us on the Sunday, greatly adding to the day and there were several other sides dancing as mixed sides. Though we still have a way to go in some areas, for me it shows that the constitutional changes of 2018 have been thoroughly embraced leaving the Morris Ring in a stronger and better place.

As we seem to have come out of the other side of the 2018 changes, it is probably time to start looking at the other issues that have been neglected over the last few months. Dance is, for me, the first of these. It is after all why we exist. Generally, I feel the standards of dance are pretty good and I have noticed clubs doing dances they can do well instead of what they would like to do. The adage 'A simple dance done well is better than a difficult dance done badly' seems to have been taken to heart by many (even if they don't know it). A few years ago, I only rated 4 North West sides. Now I don't have enough digits to count them, the standard has improved that much. The same can be said for Rapper. However not all styles and traditions can say the same. One example is Lichfield. I rarely see it danced well, though many clubs think they can. I have some ideas about this, so watch this space, but there are a lot of you out there and no reasons why you cannot try to improve dance standards yourselves. There are plenty of people who will help you out.

I have always felt Ring Meetings are one of the things that makes us different from our sister organisations and are great fun. Unfortunately, they are becoming thinner on the ground for a variety of reasons and we only actually had 2 in 2019. 2020 is looking better with 4 at the moment 2 of which will not be following the traditional format. If your club thinks it would like to do something special but don't know how to go about it there are documents on the web page to help, or just have a chat with your area rep or the Morris Ring officers. There are various options and we are open to new ideas. Tradition is great, it developed for a reason, but we should not allow it to tie our hands. That way lies oblivion.

Recruitment is still an issue. We should not think it has just disappeared because of developments over the last few months. The same problems apply. I have noticed many clubs using Morris sites on facebook but I would have thought it only attracts people who are already involved in Morris. Have you had any success with recruiting? If so, please share it with us all via the MRGG or an article for 'The Circular', make sure your area rep knows so they can spread the word. Whatever, please don't keep it to yourself.

That is probably enough from me for now but it would be remiss of me if I didn't say thank you to the many people who make the running of the Morris Ring possible. They are far too numerous to start naming individually and I would hate to miss some out so I shall leave it as a 'thank you' to you all whoever you may be and whatever you have done, however small, to help make the Morris Ring work. However, there are two people it is only correct I should name and thank. That is our bagman Jon Melville & treasurer Clayton Francis. Without their time and effort nothing would happen.

This is the last time I will address the ARM as Squire of the Morris Ring so may I wish whoever follows me the best of luck and I hope you have as much fun and support as I have had.

Keep on capering.

Peter Simpson.

Squire of the Morris Ring.

5) Bagman's Report – Jon Melville

The Morris Ring has celebrated a significant year, in which the Ring's first mixed dance team became full Members, the first all-female team joined as Associates and the general standard of dancing out and about seems to be improving. Even coverage in the Press is generally more positive! The Ring seems to have turned a corner, with a growing active membership, more diversity in dance styles at events, increased interest in hosting and attending events and a significant number of younger members dancing out. The Jigs Instructional in particular was highly successful, with many new faces and fully-functioning knees, and a significant proportion vowing to return next year. There will be many positives for the next Squire to build on, although the increasing age profile among the membership is still a concern.

I should like to offer my thanks to all those hosts who have invited me to their Ales, Feasts and events in my capacity as Bagman, and especially those who have also welcomed Emma; to Pete de Courcy and Martin Jones who keep the technology functioning and the Spam at bay; and to Ed Worrall, Pete Simpson and Clayton Francis for all the hard work they have put in during the past year and the support they have given the Ring and its Bagman.

Might I remind Bagmen to circulate the Newsletter to club members when it arrives, and ask everyone to read it, before requesting information which is contained therein? 75% of all emails from members ask questions where the information has already been made available. In respect of changes to side officers, insurance certificate downloads and the new on-line system, a full guide to using the system was in the autumn Newsletter (116).

From a personal perspective, I feel that I have succeeded in what I set out to achieve in becoming Ring Bagman and am actively seeking a replacement for the role at the next ARM. I'm more than happy to continue in a supporting role for my replacement for as long as needed.

Events update:

Places are available for the JMO event in Liverpool and all Ring Meetings for summer 2020 currently have capacity – please book as a matter of urgency (with projected numbers in the case of Ring Meetings).

Jon Melville, Bagman of the Morris Ring

6) Treasurer's Report – Clayton Francis

1 Introduction

This is my second Treasurers Report. At the time of writing this report, the accounts have not been completed 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.

2 Membership

The biggest change to membership has been the method of renewal. I instigated a transfer to an online system via the MR website which I specified and was completed with the skills of Natty Web our current host.

This transition wasn't easy nor without its teething problems but now the vast majority of sides are able to update their side's data and download their PLI confirmation at liberty. I will be putting forward a survey soon for feedback and or suggestions

I gave sides an incentive to pay electronically which wasn't communicated in the most concise manner and led to some confusion. Let me outline what was intended.

Standard renewals fees are;

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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Additional discount for 2020 renewals ONLY if paying by bank transfer and renewed by November 30th;

Full	£40	Associate	£30	Joint	£20
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In Newsletter 115 the early payment figure was quoted as the standard fee and reductions came from there. Some sides responded to that and have paid accordingly. So if you have underpaid, it is my error.

If you have overpaid and you wish to have a refund, please send an email to me with what you think you are entitled to and dates of payment etc by May 31st, otherwise, I'll assume you are content. Apologies for this confusion.

Currently, there are 14 outstanding renewals that are either tardy in their application or have decided to go elsewhere or disband. I am in the process of clearing this up and expect to do so by the ARM.

Also noted that there were more than 12 sides that missed the November discount deadline, had to be chased and ended up paying £10 more than they needed to. A driver for next year.

My intention to drive behaviour towards bank transfers has been largely successful as the number of cheques received this cycle reduced from over 60 to six.

Lastly and on a positive note.

Horwich Prize Medal Morris Men have joined as Joint members - Welcome!

3 Insurance

Our insurance cover that is arranged as part of the JMO is in place for 2020 is with a new provider – Ansvar. They are a specialist insurance company originally from Sweden with excellent credentials and are providing the same levels of cover at a very good rate which still give sides excellent value for money.

3 Classes of Membership

Our 2020 membership consists of;

Full	125
Associate	20
Joint	3

Overall membership is down slightly.

4 Ring Finances

We supported both Ring and non-Ring events and will continue to do so.

Like last year, the officer's and shop costs for attendance at Ring Meetings from MR funds are shown as a separate line in the accounts.

The Shop - attended fewer events than in recent years and has plans for 2020 to increase on this

Archive Fund – As you will see from the Archive report, the group has been busy and some funds have been spent preparing to catalogue our archive at The Essex Record Office. Overall donations

remained similar to last year. We did gratefully receive a single substantial donation from a side member who wishes to remain anonymous which has made a difference to the Fund.

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 previous levels.

5 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.

We are financially supporting youth projects to encourage new life into our tradition, jigs workshops to drive up dancing standards and providing grants to Ring Meetings to enable more of you to attend and meet other sides. We have enhanced our website to make it easier to view on mobile devices and we will continue to supply your needs from The Morris Shop.

Put together this is an ambitious combination of direct subsidy and increased risk taken against a background of increasing costs and falling membership. This is only made possible by our current financial strength and we must not squander it.

6 Future Plans

I am not proposing any significant changes for the next round of renewals but want the current ones to bed in. Any suggestions on improving our current process are always considered.

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,
11th February 2020



Clayton Francis
Treasurer
The Morris Ring

7) Chair of the Advisory Council's Report – Ed Worrall

The Advisory Council has worked on a number of topics referred to it by the Squire since the 2019 ARM.

In particular proposals to update the Morris Ring Constitution to bring this into line with external Grant bodies requirements and revised advice to member sides on the use of black face paint.

The Advisory Council did not meet in the autumn of 2020, but communication between the Council members and the Squire and Officers has been regular throughout.

On a personal note, the Advisory Council meeting at the 2020 ARM will be my last as Chair. I would like to thank all the members of the Council for their help in discussing the issues arising and wish Pete Simpson well as the incoming Chair.

It has been an honour to serve the member clubs of the Morris Ring over the last 10 years or so as Treasurer, Auditor, Squire and AC Chair.

Ed Worrall

Chair of the Advisory Council

8) Archive Report – Chris Wildridge

Morris Ring Archive Group Annual Report 2019/20

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 Simmons

Introduction

This report covers activities of the Group for the period from the ARM 2019 onwards.

MRAG Meetings 2019

The Group held one meeting in 2019 at the ARM.

Activities

Proof of Concept Project

With the agreement of the Squire of the Morris Ring the digitisation of a key packet of documents, Lionel Bacon's manuscript notes for the Black Book [MR6725 comprising 1,092 pages], was approved. The work scheduled for September and is now completed.

The digitised images were copied to the Chairman who is carrying out a cataloguing exercise with the support of ERO staff. This is proving to be more time consuming than anticipated but it is providing useful data which is one of the key objectives of the project.

MRAG Archive survey 2018/19

The 2018 survey was carried out in late 2018 on the basis of members of MRAG contacting their friends and asking them to participate in the survey.

The outcome was a valuable insight into the importance that Sides attached to their archives. A report has been completed and will be published in conjunction with the findings of the 2019 survey.

MRAG Archive survey 2019

Working from the basis of the initial 2018/19 survey members of MRAG reviewed and refined the questions.

It was agreed that the survey of all Morris Ring Sides would be conducted using the SurveyMonkey online tool. It was carried out from 31st October – 30th November 2019. The Bagman of the Morris Ring advised all associated Sides of the URL for the survey. We formally thank the Bagman for his assistance and advice on contacting Sides. There were 40 responses or just over 22%. I am advised that this is a good response rate for such waldon surveys. A report will be published as indicated above.

Morris dance sources

Work progresses slowly on this project. The current focus is on integrating the data from the proof of concept project at time permits. Suggestions / proposals for additional printed sources of Morris dance / music notations are welcome. Contact the Chairman through the email address on the MR website.

Chairman's activities

Other than involvement with the above the Chairman:

Met with senior staff at the Essex Record Office in March and September 2019. On each occasion taking forward the proof of concept project was the focus of the discussions.
Sent and received emails and phone calls on many issues related to the MR Archive

Finance

The MRAG was the beneficiary of a significant donation during the year. It is recorded as a "Gift from the Estate of Betty Moore". The bequest asked that the gift be used to support the work of the Archive Group and specifically that it some of the bequest be used to support the acquisition of material for the Photographic Archive. The Squire of the Morris Ring wrote formally to thank the donor.

The Archive Group had agreed at it 2019 meeting that Duncan Broomhead would be able to recommend the acquisition of images using MRAG fund subject to the Chairman's approving his recommendations. All financial transactions will be monitored by the Treasurer.

New Dance Collaborator's Report, December 2019 – Colin Andrews

Since taking over as New Dance Collaborator at the 2019 ARM I have received all of the material gathered by my predecessor, Mike Wilkinson. New material received includes details of the Knightwick dances (from Faithful City), the Headless Cross dances (from White Hart) , and the dances devised by Plymouth Morris . Notation of some dances in pre-existing Cotswold traditions have been supplied by Exeter, Victory, and Shakespeare Morris Men, and other communications on specific dances have come from Ist Class Stamp, Banchory Ternan and Lincoln & Micklebarrow. A correspondent from the now defunct Sydney Morris Men has provided me with details of dances which they devised. Several sides have provided details of their repertoire, including some new dances.

No requests have been received asking for notation or information on any tradition, old or new.

Whilst the lack enquiries about specific dances may appear disappointing, I am more encouraged by the number of clubs that have submitted information about their dances, and I would urge all clubs that have not as yet deposited details of their composed dances (whether in existing traditions or their own) to do so. Dances can be so easily lost or forgotten, and the provenance of a particular 'new' dance can be difficult to establish as it becomes absorbed and adapted into the repertoire of sides beyond its originator – as I have found from personal experience with two dances in recent months.

My work in extending the Morris dance database continues in parallel with the new dance collaborator role. Notation of new dances, however, remains solely in the domain of new dance collaborator and is not published or shared without the permission of the individual or side providing the notation.

Further contribution from Morris sides in providing details of repertoire and new dances is an on-going process and I would encourage all member sides of the Morris Ring to become actively involved.

Photographic Archive Report for 2019 – Duncan Broomhead

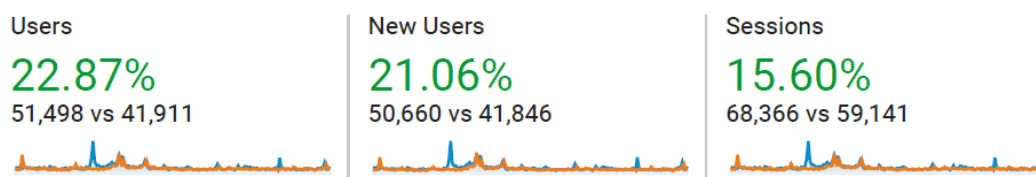
It has been another busy and productive year for the Photographic Archive. I sent or received 376 emails on 49 different topics, provided 92 photographs & 32 information files. I received 42 new photographs plus a lot of information. I dealt with a wide range of people, including archivist, collectors, Morris sides, film makers, researchers, The Morris Federation, Sword Dance Union and the Vaughn Williams Memorial Library. I also enlisted Charlie Corcoran and Matt Simons to help with two collections within the archive.

Charlie is working through boxes of photographs of Thaxted Ring Meetings from the 1960s & 1970s, they were taken David Campbell, a professional photographer from Saffron Walden. Charlie has agreed to take on the task of identifying and cataloguing all the sides. This is an ongoing project and will be carried out by referencing the various Ring Meeting Logs Books.

In June 2019, MRAG member, Matt Simons commenced work on the digitisation and cataloguing of a collection of facsimile photographs taken from a scrapbook compiled by inaugural Squire of the Morris Ring, Alec Hunter, and his wife, Margaret. Consisting of some 180 items, largely of Letchworth and Thaxted sides from the 1920s-1940s, it is a valuable collection, providing glimpses into the period before and immediately after the formation of the Morris Ring. In the work of identifying photographs, Matt has sought the assistance of both Mike Goatcher of Thaxted and Richard Hunter, Alec and Margaret's grandson. Owing to Matt's personal circumstances, the project was placed in abeyance for several months, but he hopes the work will be completed in the first quarter of 2020.

9) Web Editor - Peter De Courcy

A big improvement following last year's drop-off with over 20% increase in users and new users and a 15% increase to over 68,000 visitor sessions during the last year, viewing our pages 148,316 times.



We gave the site a spring clean at the beginning of 2020 updating many pages, completely revamping the [Links](#) page, adding an [Events Calendar](#) to replace duplicated listings, together with an improved [Ring Meetings index](#). We had earlier added a page on [Girls' Carnival Morris Dancing](#) and added links to Roy Dommett's republished [Morris Notes](#) to our [Bibliography](#). Importantly, Clayton Francis introduced the [on-line membership](#) updating honestly facility for member sides, which some users have taken to more than others- it's not difficult – even a Fool can do it! You may also have noticed and improved typeface appearance at the request of a few members with ageing eyes.

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 and 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.

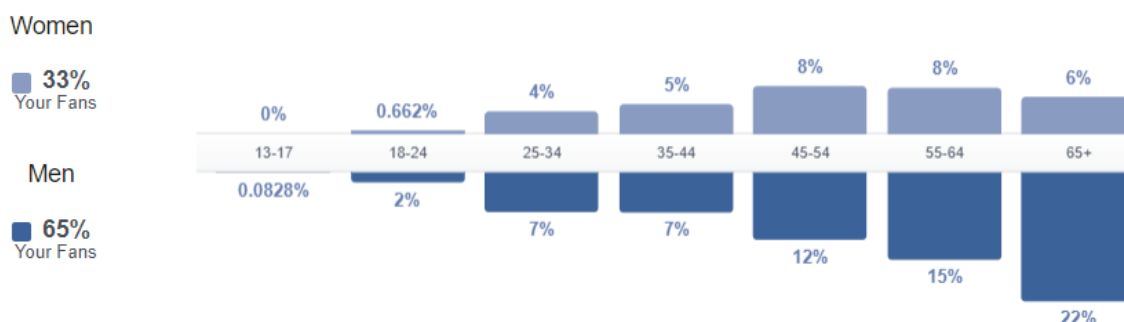
The [Morris Ring Matters](#) news summary still proves popular with Manchester Morris Men taking the prize for the first time for most “googlable” media coverage in 2019, though they were aided by a certain TV programme. The popular [Traditional Events](#) pages are updated regularly a couple of weeks before each of “The seasons”. Sides without up to date websites will be missed unless you tell me about your “Traditional” event (and sadly there are too many moribund sites).

As always any technical issues, and there were very few, were quickly solved by Martin Jones of [Natty Web Development](#) (and Dartington Morris). He was also kept very busy this year introducing the new online membership system as well as my oft requested “tweaks”; my thanks again to him for making my job so painless. My target of making updates within 48 hours of receiving them has been maintained, holidays and weekends of dance permitting ... and mostly within a day.

We're keen to have a lively, fresh and informative web site that is a first port of call for anyone with an interest in Morris - but news on the website, in our opinion, must be newsworthy and not just for the sake of it. If your side has items or photos you believe are of national (or even international) interest, please, please let me know at webeditor@themorrisring.org.

I continue to share much information posted on Facebook by Ring sides on our own Facebook page, though I have been a little more selective this year as the page was getting overwhelmed.

Importantly I post links to our website events, news items and journal publications which we don't want to get lost. The number of people liking our page continues to increase is now over 1200, broken down as below. The 22% figure increased 1% over the year. A lot of us are getting older!



Peter de Courcy

10) Overseas Bagman's Report – Nigel Strudwick

The Ring still has seven sides in the Overseas category, and I have received reports from four of them, which I will summarise further below.

There was one Ring meeting abroad this year, that in Utrecht, to which I was sadly unable to go. Their meeting was rewarded with very fine and warm weather, and all who attended had an excellent time. Sides present were Benfieldside and Durham Rams Morris and Sword Men, Yateley Morris Men, Helmond and a number of individuals, among whom was the Squire of the Ring. A number of excellent photographs of the event are available on Utrecht's Facebook page, including of a waterborne tour of the town.

Helmond were over in the UK for Thaxted's annual meeting, where I had the pleasure of dancing with them. At Thaxted, I met two members of the Hankies gone Awry side from the US of A; they had been in the UK for a tour with the whole side, and had remained on for this meeting (they also danced out one evening with my side, Devil's Dyke). The Squire and I raised the issue of whether they might be interested in Ring membership, and left it with them for their consideration. Utrecht also made a visit to the UK shortly after their Ring Meeting for the Queen's Oak and Rose & Castle weekend.

I would urge sides going abroad or who have been abroad to share experiences with me, just for my records, and so that I may be able to advise any other sides who are considering travelling. This side of the OB's job is much harder to fulfil than that of keeping in touch with those abroad!

Summary of reports sent to me by individual sides

Perth have been on something of a hiatus recently, although they currently have 16 men and a female musician. Several are now either too remote or unwell to dance with them, and the average age is 70+, and they have been unable to recruit new members for years, but have decided to remain a male side. Nonetheless, they danced out last May morning, with a full side and two musicians, and had a full side for a weekend of dancing on our southwest weekend tour (SW of WA, breweries and wineries, in company with three other sides). They also danced out at Christmas in company with another Perth side, and will be part of the local major Folk Festival (Fairbridge) at Easter 2020. They are determined that Perth Morris Men, as Australia's first Morris side (1973), to continue to uphold the traditions and ethos of Morris Dancing as long as possible (until Perth Morris Men become Perth Morris Man!).

Helmond Morris were really struggling earlier this year but things have picked up this autumn. So far they have had only one practice with five dancers. This is partly because they have a new young temporary member who has previously danced with Kemp's Men and is doing a year's placement just over the border in Belgium and living with his parents not far from Helmond. They hope he will want to get permanent employment in the area after completing his degree course in Norwich. Having been to Thaxted with just four dancers and a musician and seen that it works, they are keen to come to a Ring meeting in 2020 (probably Plymouth) even with the same numbers.

I have no actual report from **Silkeborg Morris**, but I learned through my attempts to contact them that they no longer have a web site and that contact should be directed through their new Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/SilkeborgMorrisMen/>)

Utrecht, as already indicated, have been very active, with a Ring meeting and a UK visit. In addition, they have performed their normal calendar of regular events from April through to November, even though that at the Cafe de Potdeksel in Utrecht had to be cancelled due to problems between the venue and the City Council; it was replaced by a cycling tour.

Pinewoods MM sent me a very full report. In the past twenty years or so, they tell me PMM have gone from strength to strength. As they enter what many call a new decade, they are in good shape. They have 18–20 active dancers, and can field two and sometimes three sets reliably. In 2019, they danced a lot: the New England Folk Festival, followed by the annual PMM family outing on Nantucket at the end of April where they feature in the Daffodil Festival. As the year moved forward, they did the “Gourmet” tour in New Hampshire organised by Marlboro Morris and Sword, then the Marlboro Morris Ale on US Memorial Day weekend. The following week, they helped send off visiting English sides, Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhoden's Tuppeny Dish, with a fine

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Thursday evening, together with Orion Longsword and Muddy River Morris. Prospects are bright for 2020, with the highlight expected to be a visit to England in July to attend the Great Western 50th anniversary celebration. They will be touring for about a week afterwards (or before), mostly in the west, but not going further afield than classic Cotswold villages. Do get in touch if any side wants to join them.

11) Elections

Squire of the Morris Ring 2020-2022

Simon Newman, Earlsdon Morris, proposed Anker Morris Men



First, I would like to thank Anker Morris for their nomination to be the next squire of the ring; it is an honour to be considered. Having been a member of Earlsdon Morris since the age of 9, I have held the role of squire for 15 years. Over the years I have danced the length and breadth of the country, meeting many teams and making friends from not just ring teams but with people across the Morris community.

For me, Morris is about sharing experiences and making memories. I am passionate about putting on the best performance we can, by not only concentrating on the standard of dance but also how well we engage an audience. At the heart of the Morris is joy and friendship.

The Ring has undergone many changes in recent years. Though not all will agree, I believe these changes have put the Ring on course to ensure its relevance in the modern Morris scene and I would be honoured to continue to champion these values going forward. The Ring has the richest traditions and a huge range of resources, I believe these are our greatest strengths and should be utilised as much as possible to encourage the next generation of performers. If elected Squire I will be humbled to embody the future of the Morris Ring. The Morris ring has evolved, let us continue to demonstrate it!

Thank You
Simon Newman
Squire Earlsdon Morris

Nigel Strudwick, Devil's Dyke Morris Men, proposed White Rose Morris Men

In January 1992 I went to Devil's Dyke's first practice of the year and have been with the Side ever since. I've had two stints as Bagman and two as Squire. There I learned the central importance of dancing well and maintaining standards, but also the need to adapt to the Morris Dance world in the 21st century.

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I've been Ring Overseas Bagman since 2012 and have tried to maintain contact with Sides far and near. A highlight was dancing with Perth MM in Australia in 2017. I was elected as Eastern Area Rep in 2016, and quickly realised the need to keep all Sides fully informed as the intermediary between the Ring Officers and the clubs, which was particularly important during the changes to the Constitution in 2018.

The last decade has seen many changes in the Ring and we must not only look ahead to continue the good work of those changes, but we must also ensure that the things that make the Ring so special to us are maintained. It is difficult to know what challenges there are to come, although recruitment is a major issue that many clubs are addressing, but the Ring Officers must ensure that there are strong links between all of our member clubs, and continue to work for all Morris through the JMO. Developing positive lines of communication with the other Morris and folk organisations is more important now than ever.

Area Reps

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 (2020)

North East, Brian Pollard (2019)

West Midlands, Mark Carter (2020)

Eastern, Nigel Strudwick (2019)

South West and Wales, Paul Reece (2020)

South East, Fred Hands (2021)

Any potential changes to Area Reps will be discussed and voted upon by show of hands in the Area Meetings before the ARM.

12) Area Representatives' Reports

East Midlands, Charlie Corcoran

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Unfortunately, I have not been able to 'visit' all of the sides in the East Midlands on their home patch but have crossed paths with most of them over the past year. It is obvious that as the majority of sides in the area have existed for years, they have developed their own niche within their own and the wider Morris community. With that in mind I asked each to provide their own brief summary the general health of their side, how their dancing season had been, highlights, events organised or attended, links with other sides local to you, good stories, that sort of thing. I also asked them about their membership strength and recruitment. This report is a compilation of their responses, so thanks to their Bagman, or in Leicester's case their Squire, as I thought that another point of view would be useful.

Aldbury Morris Men

The highlight was our year was our Golden Day of Dance on 8th June 2019, celebrating the side's 50th Anniversary. Founder member and instigator of the side, Rod Puddefoot, is still a regular musician and occasional dancer. The Day was a fantastic success with 8 sides (Whitethorn, Wicket Brood, Whitchurch, Letchworth, Thames Valley, Baldock and Hemlock), 80 dancers, a well-filled coach to 6 dance spots in the Chilterns, including dancing in Aldbury Church as part of their Dance-a-thon and a splendid Feast in the evening.

This Summer we have danced out just about every Thursday night and at a mix of other events. It is perhaps worth noting that we never had to cancel a Thursday night appearance, although numbers were tight on a few occasions. A mixed blessing: we get more requests to perform than we can raise dancers to meet. Throughout the year we run music sessions in a succession of local pubs, and these are attended by performers from within and without the Morris world.

Our side draws on a pool of 4 official musicians and 16 regular dancers, with a further 4 or 5 "occasionals". The year before last sadly saw the death of one of our longest performing men and one of our younger and strongest dancers left. We were lucky, though, in fielding the Green Man from a collapsed side further afield. To the delight of the side this week an ex-member who turned out very occasionally turned up to off-season practice, saying he intended to resume combat! He had provided the catering for our Day of Dance, which rekindled his enthusiasm.

As is all too common with most sides, youth is missing – none of our men are in less than their 40s, with most in 60s and 70's. One glimmer of light is that we successfully entertained a troop of Explorer Scouts to one of our out-of-season practice nights. We intend to attempt to continue with this link.

Of course, this will bring gender issues to the fore in our all male side as the Explorers include young women. For several years, though, we have shared dance-outs and weekends away with mixed and women's sides. Currently 4 of our side have shared membership with other sides in a 25-mile radius.

www.aldburymorris.co.uk

Anker Morris Men Joe Oldaker

Team numbers remain steady at 18, though only 15 of those are regular. As I write there is a prospect of a previous member returning and bringing his cousin with him as a spin-off from the Hinckley Bullockers. The main curb on our activities is the number of injured knees, ankles, tendons etc which tend to afflict what is admittedly an aging team. I don't think we are alone!

We had a good year generally, with the usual regular pub spots on Wednesdays, and a series of paid bookings which covered the normal running expenses (mainly rent) – since the local Council ceased to have much of a budget for entertainment, we have had to work a bit on bookings, though the Council paid us for Heritage Day. We do not levy a subscription on members.

High spots were the Midsummer Morris gathering at Baxterley; evenings with Chinewrde and Pennyroyal Garland; a Sunday afternoon at Astley Castle, helping celebrate the George Eliot bicentenary, and the Atherstone "Dickens" event, complete with Chinese Lion Dancers.

www.ankermm.co.uk

Anstey Morris Men Darren Rushin

Our dancing season was good, though we had to cancel about 4 Wednesday evenings due to low numbers. We are thus making alterations for forthcoming season. Highlights were Folk East and our end of season tour and party. Upton Folk Fest and the Gate to Southwell were good, as always. Moira Canal Festival, Leicester CAMRA Beer Festival and Newark Traditions Festival were also great.

We attended plenty of festivals, but usually just for the Saturday, due to some not wishing to camp.

Links with other local sides were frequent. We danced out with Anstey Royal Chalfont, Bakanalia, New St. George, Pennyroyal, Leicester, Scotch Mule and Charnwood Clog. We also forged a friendship with Black Diamond of Darlington

The general health of the side is not too positive. We have lost a couple of key members recently, which has damaged morale and put our future in jeopardy. We have not recruited within the past year. We did have a guy join us for a few practices, but travel was a problem, so he dropped off. We're struggling for numbers.

www.ansteymorris.com

Bedford Morris Men Phil Cooper

Once again, we have had a busy year. Below is a flavour of our activities, with the longer excerpts being taken from "The Morris Diaries of Mr. Paul Carter."

Bromham Mill Apple Day Sunday 21 October 2018. The fine weather brought in hundreds of people to see us and the Fool had to mobilise his recruitment placard with the slogan Join Our Caper! to push back the crowd for space to dance. They were four or five deep... and the first show ended with a good fifty of the audience in a circle for Shepherds Hey. During the event the Squire, Tim Durrant, announced the award of Life Membership to Les Skinner for his outstanding services to music, song and dance over many years.

Border Tour Wednesday 19 December 2018. Our minibus took us to The Polhill Arms, Renhold; Evesham: The Anchor, Great Barford; The Crown, Willington (where we had been double-booked with The Old Geezers); then onto The Devonshire for the finale. The winter season continued with our usual **Boxing Day** with dancing on the Embankment at Bedford followed by dancing and the Boar's Head Ceremony at the Swan Hotel. On, we were at the Dunton Wassail. We joined with Letchworth Morris Men and the Brafton Guizers to take it in turns border to entertain the large crowd. Following this we performed the Abbot's Bromley Horn dance in front of the audience prior to leading them into the orchard for the start of the Wassail. **Plough Play Tour** Monday 7 January 2019. The Three Cups, next door to The Castle, then onto The Wellington. We rounded off the Winter season, on Friday 18 January 2019 we joined an enthusiastic group of locals at Harrold & Odell Country Park Wassail. We joined the wassailing and afterwards took advantage of a fine apple-themed buffet. We then retired to the Bell, Odell to give the Plough Play a final outing for the year.

Ickwell May Festival Monday 6 May 2019. The Crown, Northill before we 'Winstered the half mile to the green. At the arena we paused, to allow the Queen of the May, attended by maids and pages, some carrying decorated hoops, to pass ahead before completing a lap of honour. Then, after a pint-sized visit to the cricket pavilion, we basked on the green, amid stalls and amusements. A number of men attended the Celebration of the Life of Ted Carter in Willington Church on Thursday 9 May 2019. Ted had been a Bedford Morris man for many years, including as Bagman. We danced afterwards as the congregation made their way from the Church.

Our summer season included pub nights at: The Robin Hood, Clifton Reynes; Polhill Arms, Renhold; Crown, Willington; Crown, Little Staughton; Cock, Pavenham; Ickwell Cricket Club; Royal George, Stevington; Three Cranes, Turvey; Cock, Broom; Stone Jug, Clophill with Letchworth; Bell, Odell. The final summer event saw us dance with local sides and invited guests at the Bedfordshire Day of Dance in Bedford on Saturday 20 July 2019. We danced Cotswold in the morning, followed by an afternoon of NorthWest.

The general health of the Side is good. We have had a couple of new recruits who are learning well and give us 'older dancers' a rest from time to time. However, recruitment remains our main issue for survival and as yet we have not found the secret (if there is one) of attracting new men to our practices. Heads are up for 2020 and we hope to continue with regular Wednesday pub nights with a few festivals & fetes from time to time.

Website:- www.bedfordmorrismen.com

Brackley Morris Men Stephen Ferneyhough

We celebrated the 60th anniversary of our 1959 reformation (after a 30-year break) with an Anniversary Celebration, with current and past members gathering for a feast, speeches, singing, etc.

Membership: Currently around 15 who are either regular or occasional, averaging 9 or 10 at most of our practices. Age range: Half well into their 60s, 3 x 50s, 2 x 40s, 1 x 30s, 1 x 20s and 1 aged 9 who comes with his Mum, who is a dancer with a local lady's side.

Outings: In 2019 we completed 29 events. Our own events: St Georges Day (Mumming); May Day morning (5.30am on Brackley Market Place with two visiting sides, followed by breakfast and beer in the pub); Summer Solstice (Us with three visiting sides dancing on Brackley Market Place, followed by food and music in the pub); August Bank Holiday Summer tour (2 days dancing at a fete and other local venues, mostly pubs), Winter Ale (with other invited Cotswold sides, male, ladies and mixed. Approx. 60 in total) and Boxing Day (just the Brackley men on the Market Place + a couple of pubs).

We participated in 2 Community events (Council, School, Church, etc.); 7 Social events as guests of other sides (days of dance, pub nights, etc.) and 14 Paid events (mostly fetes + occasional weddings) which pay all our fixed costs thereby avoiding the need for subs.

We received almost 70 invitations last year, far more than we can accept. We turned down 17 social events and 13 paid events, either because we were already engaged, or through lack of available men. The choice of which to attend is largely down to the willingness/availability/preference of the men. But as Bagman, I try to guide us according to three principles: Is it likely to be fun? Will it help our public profile (i.e. within our territory and large audiences)? and will it earn us an income (fees or collections)? We also try to dance each year at important local places where we have a long association: Canons Ashby House (according to them the Curate in 1578 was reputed to have been a morris dancer), Stowe House (we have records of BMM dancing there in the 1800s) Aynho House (we have records of BMM dancing there in the 1720s and 1730s), and Sulgrave Manor (the ancestral home of George Washington). In summary I think we align ourselves more to local events and organisations than we do to other Morris sides. Although we've rarely taken part in any Ring or JMO events in recent years, we did send 5 members to the Jig workshop in January, which was very much appreciated by the participants and by our side as a whole.

We are financially sound. In addition to our paid events we also sometimes collect. This covers all our fixed costs such as practice hall, public liability insurance, website costs, etc. The men pay no subs but fund their own kit and fuel costs. We have enough left in the kitty each year to make a donation to charity, which in 2019 was £200 for the Brackley Community Hospital.

Other activities: It's not just about the dancing. We are fully family friendly. We have men from all walks of life, from solicitors to gardeners. We try to harness all the skills of the men. One is good with internet and Facebook; another is a bookbinder who has bound all our logs from the last 60 years. One has taught morris dancing in one of the local schools, we have two accounts people, and we have musical skills. We've written up our history, published on the website, and in 2013 we made a CD telling the story of the BMM from Tudor times to the present day using the sound of our dances, narratives from our history, and songs that we've written ourselves. We sold almost 300 copies, mostly locally.

Attitude to women: As a local side with four hundred years of history behind us we choose to retain our all-male heritage, but we voted unanimously to accept the Ring proposal to end its male-only stance. We have good relations with local ladies and mixed sides. Women are more than welcome to join our tasters and practice nights, or to join us as musicians. We want to remain a traditional side, but with (hopefully) a modern approach

Publicity: We started serious publicity around 6 years ago when we realised that there was often little audience when we danced out. So I took on the role of publicity officer. We use all the means we can think of: Newspaper, village newsletters, our own website, web-based what's on media, Twitter, Instagram, leaflets, and very heavy and regular use of Facebook. The impact has been better audiences at our Boxing Day and May Day outings, and a significant increase in requests to dance at fetes etc. All of this has given us, I believe, a much stronger public profile than we previously had.

Recruitment: We have the same difficulties as most other ageing male-only sides, but we keep at it. Repetition and perseverance. We've gained one or two new men each year in the last few years but have lost men at the same rate. Four or five years ago we had only 2 active men actually living in Brackley. We now have 6. I believe that our emphasis on local events, local publicity, and our local heritage has helped this. We've designated all our practices from January to March as 'free open tasters' for anyone to come and have a go - men, women, and (accompanied) children. Having such tasters gives you a specific subject to publicise, and we publicise heavily.

Website: www.thebrackleymorrismen.org.uk

Facebook: The Brackley Morris Men

Dolphin Morris Men Martin Morley

Dolphin Morris remains very active with weekly practices during the Winter Months, and Tours in the Summer, a visit the Manchester JMO and a Weekend of Dance with our friends Greensleeves Morris. We do few "gigs" unless they are of particular interest to us.

We maintain our relationship with other local sides, including from the other organisations, through joint tours, our annual "Come All Ye" and attending various Feasts and other side's events, often as a side, but sometimes with representatives.

Members of the side continue to support the Ring Jigs Instructional, the Hayfield Morris (North Derbyshire) and Dancing England by making up a major proportion of the Nottingham Dancing Butchers.

While we have a good number of members on the books, not all are able to attend regularly. We have a strong core membership, so we have a side plus music, but not always sufficient to dance our 8 men traditions.

We have been lucky that we have a new member who is making excellent progress in learning the dance.

www.dolphin-morris.co.uk

First Class Stamp Emma Melville

First Class Stamp are doing well. We had a good year and really enjoyed dancing into the Morris Ring at Jockey Ring Meeting. We were made to feel very welcome. We also did Chippenham Festival last year and have been invited to be Sidmouth's Appalachian team in summer 2020.

We danced out with several local sides across the summer, as well as our usual Monday night dance outs, and one of our number got married (which was why we couldn't be Sidmouth's invited side last summer!).

Our numbers are small but stable and our 'country' members (those away at university and so on) come back to join us regularly. As a lot of their courses finish this year, they may well be back on a more permanent basis this summer. One member returned during the year having had time off to have children and we picked up a couple of itinerant musicians at various events.

All in all, a good year, and another good one to look forward to.

www.1stclasstamp.co.uk

Foresters Morris & Sword Dance Club Stewart Thompson & Eric Foxley

With a few exceptions the 2018 programme was very similar to that of the previous eight years. One notable event was the Pagan wedding in The Pheasantry brewery: Processional dancing in front of a horse pulling a decorated cart was always going to be risky. In the event we danced faster than the horse and had to wait for it at the first bend. The Robin Hood Beer Festival [an annual event with 1200 beers and 250 ciders] was moved to the Ice Arena in 2018. The dancing at the event went well, especially in the courtyard area at the front entrance to the Arena. However, dancing in front of the cider drinkers proved too much for most of us. It was not that we had

anything against the cider drinkers, it was simply the temperature in the packed side room. Bottesford Duck race was well attended as usual and Ken's persuasive collection methods meant we raised a substantial sum for charity. [Overall we raise about £1000 for charity each year.]

The year was once again affected by injuries and ongoing illnesses. We are the weakest I have known since I joined in 1956. We have about 10 active members, very minimal. We are sharing some events with Lincoln and Micklebarrow MM (who are two thin teams combined already) to ensure enough numbers when we're thin on the ground. We have NO new young members even though we give out welcome handouts whenever we dance and get spectators to join in e.g. Headington Constant Billy.

On several occasions we had to cancel planned events and practice nights. One man has left, another has a bad knee, a third has a bad ankle, another's wife has dementia and is thus not as available and another battling cancer.

We took our Plough Play to Beeston, where it was well received by the drinkers in the pubs we visited.

Our website www.foresters-morris.org.uk , and some of last year's photos are at

<http://www.chezfred.org.uk/www/WWW-Foresters-Morris-2019/index.htm>

<https://www.facebook.com/Foresters-Morris>

Hinckley Bullockers Tony Ashley

Not a lot to report. We held our 34th. Hinckley Bullocker's Plough Tour on Saturday 11th January. As usual we had a mixed bag of dancers and musicians. We never know who is going to be involved until the day before the event! This year there were almost as many in the band as dancers. I believe the split was 14/16. A good day was had by all with a 9.0am breakfast at the Bricklayers in Sharnford culminating in music, song and supper at the Red Lion, Sapcote at 5.30pm. with six dance spots between breakfast and supper.

Knightlow Morris Peter Austin (aka Cheesy)

In brief, we've had a good year at Knightlow. We've enjoyed a good summer programme around Warwickshire, meeting up with Coventry Morris Men and Chinewrde Morris amongst others, and this was rounded off with another visit to the Rushcart in August. We held an open workshop in September which was widely advertised and has subsequently increased our numbers by 1 new dancer. We had our annual hiatus in December while most of our members went to participate in Hinckley Bullockers, and now we're coming back and getting ready for a new summer programme. Numbers are, as with most sides, lower than we'd like but we are managing to produce a good schedule of dance outs. If any teams or individuals would like to meet up on a Tuesday night, then please get in touch.

We're having a bash on Tuesday 21st April at The White Lion in Brinklow, as a curtain raiser for our season and we've invited various teams from the locality. Any others who would like to join us please get in touch.

Leicester Morris Men Joe Krych (Squire)

Leicester Morris has performed at many locations - local and countrywide. Our performances, both dancing and music, were presented with enthusiasm and were well received with many appreciative comments. Leicester dance out every Wednesday throughout the season and often invite other local sides to dance with us. This year we were delighted that Black Annis; Anstey Morris; Anstey Royal Chalfont; Bare Bones; New St. George; Charnwood Clog and PennyRoyal Garland. Again, these evenings are popular with the public and demonstrate the wonderful camaraderie of the Morris.

In the tradition of Past Squire John Swift, we keep a careful record of dances performed and this year we performed - a total of 462 dances. However, this was reduction on previous years, due to lack of dancers, especially later in the season. The weather had been variable throughout the year and is reflected in the audiences. However, we strive to maintain a high standard of dancing.

A couple of our highlights were firstly at Sheringham with our performance of The Valentine as one of our show dances, for which we received many favourable comments, it's good to know that all the practicing is worthwhile. Another highlight, and for many of the side our favourite, was that during our performance of the Sproxton Wooing Play at Whittlesey, by chance the Straw Bear was passing and 'took part' in the play by laying down next to our stricken Tom Fool! Many in the audience had thought this had been pre-planned!

As mentioned earlier our numbers are down. Only a few years back we regularly had three sets at practice and could present the wonderful spectacle when dancing out of three sets performing the Upton upon Severn Stick Dance! This season we have lost five dancers due to personal circumstances and/or re-location and while we still have our regular Wednesday evening tours planned for the Summer, we have had to limit our other commitments accordingly. Guilty perhaps of complacency resulting in our not recruiting in the past we now recruiting earnestly and have already attracted two promising new members in good time for the coming Dance season. Although, from looking at Social Media, it appears that many other Morris sides hunting for recruits.

www.leicestermorrismen.co.uk

Facebook: Leicester Morris Men

Lincoln & Micklebarrow Morris Men Pete Moore

Lincoln and Micklebarrow Morris Men (LMMM) are the same core eight dancers and two musicians that we were in 2001. We have not attracted any permanent new members in the last five years.

We have been greatly helped over that period by a couple of Foresters men who lived in Newark. They have now returned to their south-west roots / joined the Navy. They were also the youth contingent; our youngest men are now in their early fifties. In response LMMM and Foresters have arranged regular joint practices with the aim of becoming more familiar with each other's style and dances. This has the ultimate aim of allowing either side to call on the other for help in fulfilling regular tours, paid bookings etc.

The highlight of 2019 for LMMM was the visit of the Neustadt-an-der-Weinstrasse Trachtengruppe (NWTG) in July. This visit was originally arranged by Poacher Morris, but they welcomed our involvement and participation. As part of this weekend the three teams danced at the Newark Traditions Festival and held a dancing tour of Lincoln, as well as attending a formal reception by the Mayor of Lincoln and tour of the Guildhall.

LMMM, and before them Lincoln Morris Men, have had an almost 40-year long association with NWTG. This year NWTG is celebrating its 50th anniversary and have invited both Poacher and LMMM to visit Neustadt in March for the celebrations, an invitation that LMMM intend to take up. In addition, we are planning to attend the St. Albans Ring Meeting, the Gate to Southwell Folk Festival, the Newark Traditions Festival and the Lincoln BIG Day of Dance amongst others.

Facebook: Lincoln and Micklebarrow Morris Men

Moulton Morris Men

Moulton had a very enjoyable year, performing at Chippenham, Sidmouth and Towersey Festivals, as well as Kirtlington Ale and Northampton Morris days of dance and various "regular" local gigs. We were particularly proud to have danced a full week at Sidmouth without repeating a single dance other than jigs.

Numbers remain reasonably constant at about 25 regular active members and the return to the area of some that had gone away from the village has really helped keep up the numbers. As with many sides, advancing age has been something of a problem, with several of our dancers now into their mid-twenties. This has created some issues with family and work pressures during the week, making it difficult sometimes to fill the weekly practices as well as we would like, but we have had good turnouts at weekends and performances.

With this in mind took the decision at the AGM to spread the foreman's load a bit and it is now shared by three men which has really helped. We've also recently moved our practice location to be more central in the village. We feel it is important to keep a strong village connection and do this through working with local schools, plus the Moulton May Festival and Boxing Day dance-out, which have been well attended. We continue to be self-funding through events and operate without membership subs.

We were pleased to have Windsor, Belle d 'Vain, Chinewrde, Queens Oak, Brackley and Rose & Castle sides dance at the festival this year and were blessed with excellent weather for the Maycart and dancing.

www.moultonmorrismen.com

Northampton Morris Men *Report yet to be received*

Packington Morris Men Phil_Quelch

Packington continued to thrive this year; so long as by thrive you mean - continued to exist due to the officers being too stubborn to let the team officially fold. They had no summer dance outs or winter practices, and attempts at recruiting have stopped, it being deemed a more practicable response for members to instead bolster the numbers of other teams. The few remaining dancing members (~5) could be seen up Bardon Hill on Mayday, and at the Bull & Lion Pub on Boxing day, with no plans to let this stop so long as other teams can be persuaded to join."

As is clear Packington are dead in all but name, I continue to pay the subs just so that we are covered for boxing day, which we have passed on organisationally to PennyRoyal Garland Dancers I imagine the day we truly fold will be the day PennyRoyal or the Bull & Lion Stop organising Boxing Day.

Ripley Morris Men Mick Buckley

We continue to enjoy our dancing and the camaraderie of the Morris community. In 2018 we had our usual full programme of Thursday evening dance outs and were joined by other local sides on many of these, including Ripley Green Garters, Winster Morris, Penny Royal Garland Dancers, Sullivan's Sword, Lady Bay Revellers, Dolphin MM, Makeney Morris, and Stone Monkey Rapper.

We danced out on Boxing Day and Easter Saturday and made our annual visits to local schools on 1st May. Once again, we attended the JMO Day of Dance in Peterborough. We attended St Albans' Day of Dance in September as usual.

Following a falloff in numbers attending our annual Ale Feast in recent years we decided that 2019's feast would be an open event which lead to increased numbers and newcomers to the feast from local mixed sides and other Ring sides not represented for some time. We were pleased to welcome the Squire and Bagman of the Morris Ring to the Feast.

In October 2018 Ripley Morris Men decided to become Ripley Morris thus enabling the side to reach out to new female members. On 24th January after a sustained publicity campaign in local towns and villages, press and social media we held an open evening to introduce new recruits to Ripley Morris and morris dancing. At this session we attracted seven people new to Ripley Morris of whom two had not danced the Morris before. We believe there are two or three others who

were unable to attend this session but who intend to give it a go in the future. So hopefully we might pick up a few new members.

There is no doubt that the change of status has changed the nature of Ripley Morris however our aim remains to entertain and maintain the best traditions of the Morris. Morris continues to thrive in Ripley.

Facebook: Ripley Morris

Rose & Castle Morris Men Ian Welborn

2019 was our 41st season and we are still going on. Last season was reasonably good in terms of the numbers of dance-outs that we did; some 19 in all. This was a combination of Morris weekends, summer evening dance outs and local fetes and festival. We seem to have dropped off the list of the main festivals and even if invited would probably struggle to get the commitment early enough to accept. The highlights included Golden Star's weekend and Blackheath's weekend as well as the one that we run each year in conjunction with Queen's Oak. The latter is always very successful where we normally have about 12 or 13 sides. These sides come from around the country whereas for our St. George's Day dance out we invite local teams. Every 2 years we try to organise a trip abroad. In 2018 it was Vendome in France and in 2020 it will be Marburg in Germany.

However, each year it feels that we struggle more and more to get a side to turn out. At present we have 8 regular musicians and 12 regular dancers on our books with 3 who will help us out from time to time. In the past these numbers would have been sufficient, but it seems that retirement has created other demands on our dancers' time. We lost one regular dancer who moved out of the area last year and we have 2 new recruits who have yet to dance out. So, for the time-being we are holding our own. Some years ago, we attended workshops run by the JMO on recruitment and developed a recruitment strategy with many of the ideas garnered from other sides. However, after trying out these ideas we have found that leafletting and talking to the audience while dancing out plus personal networking are our most effective approaches. But is always an uphill battle.

www.rose-castlemorris.org.uk

Towersey Morris Paul Dolman.

We're suffering the same lack of recruits as most sides that are dominated by old men. We have however, made an arrangement with a women's side, Three Horseshoes', which is very helpful. We started Three Horseshoes' about nine years ago, hoping that if there was women's Morris in Towersey, their members would have husbands, brothers or partners (we'd settle for fathers) who might join Towersey. That didn't work at all well as we had hoped. Only one man, an excellent fiddler, was a husband who provided Three Horseshoes' music. He came to a Towersey practice, discovered dancing and preferred dancing with Towersey to fiddling for Three Horseshoes. Sadly, he has since died of a massive stroke, but Three Horseshoes felt we'd stolen their fiddler! Being

male, we'd totally failed to understand that they'd have a viewpoint. Anyway, until very recently he had been the only recruit we've ever had from the Three Horseshoes', but we've got about half of another recruit now. One and a half recruits in nine years wasn't quite what we'd had in mind though.

The good news is that we now have a standing cooperation arrangement. Three Horseshoes are automatically invited to Towersey dance-outs and bookings. By now, they're getting better known and get their own invitations - even do a few pubs these days, but by ensuring that there's a good overlap between our repertoires, we're able to carry on with a full programme despite our declining numbers. We're not a mixed side - they wear their kit, we wear ours, they're a Fed side in their own right, They have their Squire and we have ours, I still at least share the Foreman's role at Three Horseshoes but I'm not Foreman of Towersey and when announcing ourselves, we say we're Towersey Morris and our very good friends Three Horseshoes are with us.

The advantages over not merging are that when we have enough men, we can dance in an all-male set. On good occasions, we can have two sets up, a men's set and a women's set. Both sides can have dances outside the common repertoire and, the main advantages are that we can dance out every week and do some fee-paying bookings, and Three Horseshoes', finances have had a major boost from sharing our collections and fees.

So, that's how we're combatting advancing age and declining numbers - and on balance it's a solution I'd recommend to anyone who has the need and opportunity to do it.

www.towerseymorrismen.org.uk

The Witchmen *Report yet to be received*

South Midlands, Roger Comley

At the season of Ales and Feasts 2019-20 it is good to see the sides which have embraced the change to become mixed to prevent a terminal condition; Peter our Squire has done all he can to help us, now it's up to us. If the remaining traditional sides in the South Midlands can keep their membership as men that is also a good activity; so please attend these mixed Ales and Feasts to experience more fun.

North, Jono Millward

Yet again I must start this year's report by apologising for my inability to get out and about among the North Area sides due to work and familial commitments. The year started out so promisingly too with a meeting of representatives from North Area sides at the practice venue of Green Oak Morris Ring

Morris Ring Newsletter No 116 November 2019

Morris Men – the Doncaster Brewery & Tap. A huge thank you to Martin Johnson, Bagman of Green Oak, for all his help in arranging the venue, producing maps and being there to greet us on arrival, even though he could not stay for the meeting itself. In attendance were representatives from Grimsby Morris, Lord Conyers Morris and Harthill Morris, and a number of topics were discussed including reaction to the vote to accept female dancers into the Morris Ring, membership and booking/dance-out figures, and revisiting an idea from my predecessor of having a geographically-extended joint day of dance under the banner of a 'North Area Day of Dance'. It was also suggested that the creation of a private Facebook group would improve communication and relations within the Area, and also the idea of making meetings such as this a quarterly event was also raised. Unfortunately, due to my inaction nothing came of the Day of Dance, Facebook group or quarterly meetings but they are all things I would love to see come to fruition in future.

Please find below information from North Area sides regarding their events and activities. As I was slightly late in reaching out to sides for these there are currently only a couple, but I hope more will be added as late additions as we near the ARM.

Green Oak Morris Men – adapted from report by Bagman Martin Johnson

2019 was a year of growth for Green Oak Morris Men of Doncaster. They saw the addition of a new member in the Spring, seeing him perform his first dance out during the Doncaster Day of Dance in May, and summer dance outs were slightly up in number from the previous year. Five current members and a sixth former member bared all for a photoshoot for the Doncaster Brewery Tap charity calendar to raise funds for local cancer support charity Firefly.

Lord Conyers Morris – provided by Bagman Peter Yendley

We have been very stable with side members, no losses but no new members.

We started the year on May Eve with a performance of our Horn Dance, quickly followed the next morning at 5.30 to dance at the Trysting Tree at Todwick a fine but cold morning.

We danced every Wednesday evening from May through to the end of July interspaced with a great weekend at Evesham Morris Weekend in June, and our half day walking tour of Shardlow in July.

August saw our annual weekend trip up to Robin Hood's Bay which was a great success as usual & and we also enjoyed joining Saddleworth for their Rush Cart.

In September we attended Bromyard Folk Festival and a great time was had by one & all.

October brought about The Bramley Apple Festival in Southwell, which then brings us onto December for our Wassail at the Jubilee Club, Wales followed by a repeat performance of our Horn Dance at the Trysting Tree Todwick.

Harthill Morris Report for 2020 Morris Ring ARM

2019 has been a significant year for Harthill Morris. We changed our constitution to remove the restriction of membership to men only in late 2018. This development wasn't broadcast very far and we continued through the practice season into the performance season in all appearances as a men-only side. However, towards the end of the performance season word had got around and on our first night of the 2019-2020 practice season we had four new female members attend – these are the first dancing recruits we have had in years.

And the practice evening was an absolute joy, with a celebratory atmosphere. Why did we not become a mixed side sooner? Boxing Day 2019 saw our first performance as a mixed side.

So, 2020 saw Harthill Morris increase its membership, we now have a healthy 27 members (9 musicians, 17 dancers and 1 mascot).

As we look forward to the 2020 season we can look forward to a busy schedule. We practice up to April, and we open our performance season on the last Thursday in April at the village pub (The Beehive), and then tour the region's public houses every Thursday through to September – ending where we started at the Beehive. Interspersed amongst the Thursday performances we have occasional weekend performances at country markets, carnivals, day of dances, our traditional May Day coach tour with the Three Shires Clog Dancers, and performing at the annual Harthill Village Well Dressing Festival.

We hold our AGM at the end of the performance season in Autumn and it kick starts our next practices season, with the 2020 Harthill Morris calendar ending with our traditional Boxing Day performances at the two village pubs.

North West, Dave Loughlin

I think we are getting little better each year although a few sides have become mixed sides to swell the numbers and continue dancing as a side with a little change to their names. Thank you to the Bagman or Squires of the side that have taken time to help me make this report.

North British Sword Dancers

The North British Sword Dancers have had a great year, starting with a London-based member's Big Birthday, which led to a practice in Ewell, a pub tour of Surbiton, a party, and a pub tour of Kingston-upon-Thames. Oh, sorry, they had already toured St. Helens by then.

In May saw them go to Belgium by minibus for the Toer de Geuze. July was Isle of Wight by hovercraft (no eels) as preparation for Whitby Folk Week, where the Papa Stour workshop went well. Sadly, Whitby meant that Saddleworth Rushcart was to be missed so to make up the disappointment they had a grand time at the Otley Folk Festival a few weeks later.

Autumn practice is in Bridgnorth, where they inducted the NEW RECRUITS and plan the campaign for next year.

Royal Preston Morris Dancers

The 2019 Season is coming to a close for Royal Preston Morris Dancers with last remaining two bookings, one in November. "Lancashire Day" on the East Lancashire Heritage Railway and the first Sunday of December the Team were invited to perform at Whalley, near Clitheroe, the Town's Pickwick Celebrations.

They have a number of Annual Events, such as The Grange-over-Sands Edwardian Festival, their 25th appearance out of 26. The Longest Day Evening Dance with guest Teams and The Mid-Summer Dance-Out in mid July this year with Malkin Morris and Rivington Morris.

They have a close relationship with the Village of Downham, a wholly owned Village and Estate by Lord Clitheroe and attended the Annual Open Garden Festival at the Downham Hall and also have an Annual Pub Tour based there.

Next September they have been "commissioned" by Lord Clitheroe, the Rt. Hon. Ralph C. Assheton, Lord High Sherriff of Lancashire to give Ralph his full title, to host an Event which is to be known as a "Clog-Fest" in the Village. Teams already are Ripon City Morris Dancers and the Lancashire Wallopers Clog Team.

During the 2018 /19 Practice Season they had three new Members which has helped enormously and in recent weeks with an extra Piano Accordion player.

A proposed walking tour of Preston hopefully with Leyland Morris Men will kick-off the new 2020 season.

Adlington Morris Men

The membership of Adlington Morris Men and Adlington Mummers currently stands at 19. The Morris side is made up of 1 musician, 9 regular dancers, plus 4 country members. There are 5 non-morris dancing members of the mummers/soulers.

Over the last 12 months they have danced out 13 times including the JMO in Manchester, and their annual tour in the Cotswolds. The Mummers performed the Alderley Edge Mumming play 3 times over the Christmas period.

Recruiting of new members remains a principle focus, as the average age is creeping upwards.

Southport Swords

Southport Swords have had a good year. May our busiest month, they were dancing on the roof of Liverpool Library the day before a successful day of dance in the same city. They then carried out a double pronged visit to Yorkshire Dales and The North York Moors over the Bank holiday weekend. In September they helped Northampton celebrate 70 years before returning to Yorkshire to retain the 2 Longsword trophies which they won last year at the Sword Dance Union longsword tournament. Their numbers have stayed the same with the possible addition of one. With great expectations they have applied to hold the SDU tournament in Southport next year and await confirmation.

Chapel-en-le-Frith Morris

In February, in an attempt to broaden their appeal, they voted to open membership to lady members. So now they are Chapel-en-le-Frith Morris, dropping the 'men' from their title.

During the year Chapel-en-le-Frith morris has done three 'Have a Go' Sessions in local villages and the decision to open up to ladies has proved fruitful. With the recruitment of three ladies and one man to the side from these Have a Go sessions. All of these new recruits are progressing well and should be able to take a full part in dancing in year 2020 season.

During the summer they have been able to continue with their dancing programme of Monday evening dance spots, sometimes with a bare minimum of dancers, but the ability to take bookings outside of the regular Monday evenings has been somewhat restricted. Nonetheless they have managed to dance out on a number of other occasions including Tideswell, Edale, New Mills and Liverpool (with Southport Swords).

As usual our Buxton Weekend of Dance in July organized to take place during the Buxton Festival Fringe was a great success.

So they are looking forward to 2020 with renewed enthusiasm.

Mersey Morris Men.

It was a good year as always for Mersey Morris Men with New Year's Day started it and Boxing Day will finish it with May Day morning up a hill in the middle. They have 31 members: 4 women musicians; 3 new recruits; 1 lives far away; 5 rarely attend and 1 is just a name on the list, so

around 24 regular attendees. In the last year they had a rapper tour in Heswall and a molly/border tour in Chester. They have danced out on Monday nights from the end of April to the end of August, which is over 20 dance spots. As well as 9 paid bookings, attended the Midlands Ring Meeting and the JMO Day of Dance in Manchester, also had 5 days out and organised a musicians day with external tutors {and excellent they were too}.

The Breton friends, from their visit there in 2018, came over for a grand Bank Holiday weekend with the Gastadours from Lamballe.

Everything looks good and should be ok for 5 to 10 years but some younger recruits are always welcome.

Chester City Morris Men

Chester City Morris Men has had another quite year regarding public performances. Their regular events of St George's Day, Chester Folk Festival and a visit to White Hart were all very successful in 2019. However, it has been difficult otherwise for them to raise a team to dance out locally or to be able to accept invitations to dance with friends elsewhere.

Numbers on the books and at practices remain very healthy but we they increasingly reliant on the services of the NHS, which unfortunately has not delivered the miracles we need quickly enough. Looking forward, they have some fresh (but not entirely young) blood so the immediate future seems secure. They go into the new year confident of their regular events and hopeful that They can add to them.

Leyland Morris Men

Despite the gloom of last year's report I would say they are in a healthier position at present.

They have six musicians, five of whom are not dancers, and ten regular dancers.

Their future is boosted by 2/3 new lads who are showing a keen interest so much so that we they hopeful of being able to dance more of their NW dances in addition to the Cotswold stuff.

2019 has proved to be as busy as ever with invites to dance and they have fulfilled at least one a month.

The down side of the year was a recruitment day that they held attracted no potential recruits either male or female despite widespread publicity. They shall as they say 'keep dancing' and more to the point enjoying them.

Manchester Morris

At Manchester they were somewhat surprised to find that there was a near unanimous agreement to admit women dancers to the team. What to do about the team's name was more contentious, but they eventually settled on Manchester Morris Dancers. They have started free beginners' workshops in an effort to recruit, and have 3 regular (women) attendees, so it's wait and see if they want to join the team.

They still have 13 regular dancers and 4 active musicians, one of whom is a recent recruit; – this is fortunate as he in effect replaces another musician who now has too many work commitments for regular attendance.

This year they have danced at 8 public events, 4 private events, and 14 evenings outside pubs in lieu of practice – mostly in the summer season. 34 other invitations/enquiries have been turned down.

They were pleased and somewhat relieved to find that the TV film "For Folk's Sake, Morris Dancing and Me" was largely sympathetic to the art of Morris dancing. Unfortunately we have not seen the presenter, Richard, again; although it might have taken some time to get him dancing well!

North East, Brian Pollard

Benfieldside Morris and Sword.

Another good dancing year. Numbers have remained steady – enough dancers to field two sides on occasions. Summer dance outs very successful and enjoyable always well received at pubs by landlords and customers alike. The highlights of the year have been the Utrecht Ring Meeting – a great weekend of dancing, fun and spectacular weather – Plough Sunday in Durham and just about everything else! Our close relationship with the Durham Rams continues to thrive to the benefit of all.

Brian Pollard

Monkseaton Morris Men.

It's been a fairly quiet year for Monkseaton. We went down to Bacup for their day of dance which was a lovely, civilised event with free beer for the dancers and musicians.

We did manage to get down to Thaxted and survived the blistering heat of the far south.

We also visited Saddleworth for their rushcart event and didn't get rained on.

This year we have raised over £1200 for charity through our dance outs.

Andrew Morris

Claro Sword.

Claro Sword have generously placed Ian Porter (our founder and mentor, choreographer of new sword dances and pre-eminent musician) on permanent loan to Manchester Morris, a more convenient journey to practice evenings after his move to Wilmslow. Blessed with two other fine musicians, the recruitment of a new member plus the return of an old member, the club continues in good form.

Claro performed at two local Plough Sunday ceremonies in January, at Thaxted in June and on summer evenings locally. Our repertoire of five sword dances, soon to be six, keeps us on our toes.

Barry Slaymaker

Durham Rams.

The side still practises morris with Benfieldside Morris Men so that the two sides continue to dance out together with the same repertoire and dancing style. A joint side also practises the rapper dance. This is currently the Durham Rams dance based on the revival Hamsteels dance of the 1920's. We have also continued to work on the Poppleton Longsword dance.

We have also had a number of engagements with Benfieldside over the last year. These include Durham Plough Sunday, Richmond on Swale day of dance, Sedgefield fair, Leeds MM Wharfedale Tour weekend and the Utrecht Ring Meeting plus fort nightly dance outs on Wednesday evenings throughout the summer. The rapper side also attended the DERT festival based in Newcastle this year.

The close ties between Benfieldside and the Durham Rams have continued and are extremely positive.

Chris Wagstaffe.

West Midlands, Mark Carter

Awaiting report.

Eastern, Nigel Strudwick

The spread-out nature of the Eastern area plus my own diary has meant that again I have not been able to get to as many teams as I would wish. Nonetheless, I did manage to meet a number of "my" sides in the course of the year at various events, from the Peterborough DoD, to the Thaxted meeting and Ale, the Warwickshire Ring Meeting and the Devil's Dyke Ale, to name some of the main ones. The saddest event I attended was the "Last Rites" of Hageneth MM in November, who decided to hang up their bells at their AGM. It must be said that they went out in style, getting enough dancers out to form two sides, and the number of other sides who were present was large and ranged over all the JMO organisations. Some Hageneth men are going to dance with other sides, and I hope their legacy will survive as the first side in the mid-Suffolk area.

There are now 12 full sides in the area, and 8 associates, the latter number including some occasional sides. I have had 11 reports. As well as enquiring about items of note to the sides in question, I asked three questions; to save space I have summarised the responses fairly briefly.

1 Side numbers: These vary widely as expected. One side has up to 29 occasionally active members (East Suffolk), Devil's Dyke have 27 on the books (including new recruits, country and inactive members), and Kemp's have 19 active with 6 musicians, while Peterborough have 18 + music. The average for an active side from the limited information I have, and personal observation, seems to be about 11–15 + music, but for so many teams, the hardest problem can be getting a side out, particularly away from home. Smaller sides report that difficulty in particular, often having to adapt dances or plays for smaller numbers of dancers/mummers. One remarkable exception to that is Blackmore, who with only 8 dancers and 3 musicians managed a complete programme of over 20 events last season.

2 Recruitment: The general feeling is one of trying without much success. Several sides comment that people are just not interested, especially younger men. A few sides that were formerly male only report having had success at recruiting women; while that issue is now constitutionally a thing of the past, it is clear that that solution is not one that many sides wish to contemplate. A couple of sides agree that new approaches need to be developed in the immediate future other than the local leafletting, traditional publicity and taster events. My own side, Devil's Dyke, reports a approach of combining traditional publicity with a very active social media (Facebook) presence, a recruiting video, and (most importantly) having not one or two but a whole month of "have a go" sessions so that possible recruits cannot use the old excuse of not being free on that one evening! Despite some practical problems, this resulted in four expressions of interest, although it has to be seen how it turns out come May.

3 New side facilities on the Ring web site: Most sides who responded on this one seem to be aware of it, although few have had to use it. The impression I gain is that it could have been better publicised and explained more clearly but it does seem to work.

In addition, in view of the present controversy about the practice of **blackening-up**, I enquired about that in selected cases. Belchamp are my only regular Border side, and they have adopted the Ring's statement on the subject and produced various flyers that include a statement about their dress code. Rutland MM do seasonal Border, and did not find the Ring's statement particularly helpful as they feel it indicates no support for sides who may find themselves with a problem; nonetheless, they have decided to change from black to blue face paint.

One other observation to do with the Ring is the suggestion from one side that more Ring meetings should provide better creature comfort options as the average age of sides increases.

The following are selected highlights that sides passed on to me (apologies to Bagmen for being selective)

Mayflower had a good dancing season, including instructing secondary children at a local school. 2020 is a big year for Billericay as the Town will be celebrating 400 years of the voyage of the Mayflower and they will be taking part in some events. Next October they plan to visit Leiden in the Netherlands for a weekend and we have already made contact with the Utrecht Morris Men and hope to dance with them sometime over the weekend,

Belchamp Morris report that their 2020 diary is almost full with planned events including their well-established St. George's Day at Hundon. In 2019 they raised a grand total of £1,004.00, which has been presented to The Bridge Project in Sudbury, who look after those with learning difficulties, dementia and mental health issues.

Peterborough have been extremely active at a variety of special events including the JMO Day of Dance Manchester, Nene Valley Railway Steam Folk & Morris Day, Oundle Fringe Festival, John Clare Festival, World Conker Championships and even the Tony Hadley Golf Classic Gala Dinner! Their Day of Dance in September marked the start of celebrations for our 40th anniversary, which has also included a reunion party for past members, and will culminate in a Ring Meeting, with a feast in the cathedral, in September 2020.

The Thameside Mummers, while fighting the numbers and recruitment problems, did about 15 gigs last year, local and weekends away, and are pleased with that. 2021 will be their 50th and they have plans to celebrate it, although there are concerns whether they will still exist as a functioning Side beyond it.

Crendon Morris have had some success in recruitment, and performed their Mummers play this time of year but, again, reduced numbers and family commitments at times put a strain on the performers. They hope to attract new members in 2020 but age and infirmity are taking their toll!

Greenwich Morris Men: Greenwich has wonderful places to dance, and there is always an interested and, usually, an international audience who often tell members about dances from their own countries; those who are most puzzled are sometimes young British people who have never seen Morris before. They have suffered being told once at a delightful pub that Morris dancing was 'not right for the image of the pub'. As ever, they danced at dawn on Blackheath on May Day, and enjoyed Rochester Sweeps and Tenterden Festivals, among other events. The highlight of the year was their own day of dance in late July when half a dozen sides joined them to dance all around Greenwich.

East Suffolk report a busy dancing season as usual, and attended the Men of Wight's Weekend of Dance, Saddleworth and Golden Star's Day of Dance.

Chameleonic MM tell me that after being inactive for a number of years, there is a cunning plan for a foreign tour in 2020.

Kemp's Men of Norwich are numerous, but have been dancing shorter stands than in previous seasons, and Tim, their Squire, is firmly of the view that the average audience will only watch for around 20 minutes. CHECK FOR ANYTHING ELSE?

Rutland MM have a reliable set of members, but they will be adopting a new plan for recruitment as they do not want to keep relying on a committed but aging group. A welcome increase of their number of musicians to 8 has had a positive effect on the style of their public performances, with more musical interludes between dance sets which is no bad thing with our age profile.

Blackmore Morris have managed an impressive programme with a small side. In addition to their regular Wednesday spots and local special events, they manage an overseas visit each year, which in 2019 was to Trieste; they were assisted in the latter by members of Owlswick and Chelmsford as well as one from Vancouver MM. In 2020 they are celebrating their 50th anniversary which kicked off with a show on New Year's Day.

Devil's Dyke Although there are potential more than enough dancers available, age is becoming more and more apparent and commitment has become an issue. Pub nights provide most of the club's income and keep the side afloat. Nonetheless, the side tries to make an annual charity donation, and last year gave the Prospects Trust the sum of £500.

South West and Wales, Paul Reece

Sides are generally in good health, regularly performing Morris in addition to seasonal Mumming and a sustained rise in Wassail attendances. Helier and West Somerset who have moved to Border in a successful attempt to raise numbers to survive. Try Morris events where open to all have resulted in greater take up from females than males. In Mendip's case they have been so successful that they are having to decide as to whether to go forward as a mixed side or to have parallel male and female sides. The temporary suspension of the Mendip Ale was as a result of these changes. In the future keeping a balance within sides that have increasing female recruits may require to be managed more carefully to preserve the essential character of what the side is about. Plymouth and Trigg have gone mixed with 3 female recruits each, the latter are very fortunate that their female recruits are already experienced in Cotswold dancers which has considerably raised both the standard and spirit of the dancing.

Bourne River 16 active members. A mixed taster session open to all is planned. If enough female dancers are forthcoming a parallel side will be formed.

Bathampton No report forthcoming.

Bristol No report forthcoming.

Cam Valley Healthy position, 13 dancers and 5 musicians. Visiting pubs midweek has largely been abandoned. Regular performers at Royal Bath and West and Mid Somerset Shows and receive more requests than they can satisfy.

Chalice average 12 at practice and have had 3 new recruits of which 2 have remained. They have 7 musicians and the side performs weekly. Held 18-30 meeting last year. Move to dance outs at local community pubs is proving to be popular.

Dartington Successful 50th anniversary year with a special Dartmouth weekend of dance and a well attended Boxing Day at Totnes. Currently 23 active members, 16 regular dancers, 5 musicians, 1 fool and 1.5 horses performing weekly during the summer and 6 to 7 outings during the winter months. Repertoire comprises about 30 dances and 4 jigs, of these 6 dances and 1 jig are from the Filkins tradition.

Exeter 13 dancers and 6 musicians, but getting a viable side out is challenging. Recruitment campaigns have not been successful consequently the future is not encouraging.

Gloucestershire have a full programme of weekly dancing, including seasonal Mumming and Wassailing they have 2 new recruits and have formed a mixed side alongside the men. No report this year.

Helier have 5 orchards and a 20 year long tradition of Wassailing with 8 active dancers and 2 new recruits following a change from Cotswold to Border. Jersey can only support one mens' and one womens' side. Recruitment is more successful with the Jersey Lilies. Transport costs sadly limit both hosting visiting sides and travelling away.

Mendip A significant drop of 10 in numbers despite a wellbeing campaign to attract recruits. A try out Morris session resulted in 12 and then 18 recruit, all but 3 were female. Rather than holding the annual Mendip Ale a Christmas party with Mendip and Try out people was organised. Another 3 new people have been added. An EGM is planned for 27th February to discuss dropping the male only restrictions to their constitution in order to have a mixed side. If unsuccessful the tryout side will become a separate side.

North Curry Mummers have 10 members drawing crowds of around 200.

Plymouth have a core of 8 to 12 active dancers, 5 to 7 musicians and 3 female dancers A very full programme of dancing and Mumming took place during the 2018 season, which included a successful visit to the Saddleworth Rushcart Festival. We dance Cotswold and our own Plymouth tradition. Nautical events such as Pirates Day, Trafalgar Day and Pickle Night are celebrated. Recruitment and the raising of new sides during the lead up to perform at Mayflower 400 and Plymouth's 50th in 2020 is our current goal and hopefully that for all those Morris sides of the South and East coasts and East Midlands and beyond with Mayflower connections. Planning for the Mayflower Morris Muster (5-6 September 2020) is well advanced.

Sweyn's Ey, the only MR Morris side left in Wales. No report this year.

Taunton Dean have 18 members performing Morris during the Summer and at Wassails.

Trigg have 12 to 15 active dancers, performing Cotswold in a full Summer programme, and with Mumming at Winter and at a regular Wassail booking. Some members also perform with the mixed Tywardreath team who also dancing Cotswold. Despite the distances Trigg regularly attends Ring meetings. They have gained 3 experienced female Cotswold dancers this year.

Uplyme have 10 dancers (male) and 5 musicians (mixed) performing Cotswold and Border 20 times on average during the Summer, including their June Morris Festival and 6 times during the Winter within 40 miles of Uplyme. They have just renamed themselves Lyme Morris.

Wessex No report this year

West Somerset have 17 members of which 5 are active and have had no new recruits. The side has divided into two dance groups, one of which is a mixed Open Border side.

Wyvern Jubilee have 17 active members who dance out every Thursday during the season.

South East, Fred Hands

Most of the clubs in the South East area are continuing to dance out regularly host their annual events and operate a full programme throughout their dancing season, many report that they have managed to recruit new members in the last year however most new recruits are now significantly older than in the past with many in their mid-fifties or older. For a number of clubs this is because dancers have moved to a different area upon retirement. Overall there have been about 20 men recruited throughout the area. **Harry Tailors** completely bucked the trend with 7 potential new recruits, but they have a far larger catchment area than most clubs.

Many clubs are still hosting regular weekend events **Greensleeves** will host their 60th annual Chipperfield weekend in July. Men of Wight will celebrate their 50th anniversary in 2020 and **Ewell St Mary** will celebrate their 40th anniversary in 2020.

Blackheath celebrated their 50th anniversary in July 2019 and two **Hartley** men celebrated dancing with the club for 50 years.

There are still only three clubs in the area that are mixed **Men of Wight** report that going mixed has improved the club and it is now “on the up” again, Being mixed has not changed the situation much for **Kingston Spring Grove** who report are doing less than they were. **Wantsum Morris men** report that they have assisted with the formation of a new lady’s side in the Canterbury area, where their foreman is teaching the dancing.

Several sides reported that they were struggling with low number last season and that struggle continues in many cases some clubs are fairing better than others. **King John’s** reported that they were struggling last year but have now managed to recruit 2 new men hosted their annual weekend of dance, the first night of the New Forest Folk Festival, hosted workshops and had the privilege of dancing on stage with Ashley Hutchings of Morris On bringing the festival to a close. **Thames valley** reported that they still have difficulty with local events with their regular member but have no problem when they are away won events where they are joined by “regional” members. **Northwood** are a very small struggling club but with only 9 members have still managed to operate a full programme including a weekend of dance and are planning another for 2020. **Woodchurch MM** reported that they had a busy season and full programme although they are generally reliant on one musician, they have not managed to recruit even though they are a village club and most of their members are resident within the village.

Wadard MM have lost over half the membership due to deaths, retirement through injury, and members moving away over the last 7 years. And during the last year have had 2 further members with serious health issues. **Wadard** have now opted to continue as an occasional side performing at specific events if we can raise a side to dance, the majority of dancers are now dancing with other sides but will dance as **Wadard**, as and when they can. **Buckland Shag** is the other side who is struggling with low numbers and is not always able to practice but is still trying.

I am encouraged to hear that despite having a number of members in their 80's **Martlet's** foreman has written a number of new dances which allow the older men to dance dances within their ability, without doing anything too athletic. but to continue dancing well.

During the last year I have managed to attend a variety of events hosted by the clubs in the area,

I was invited to join the 61st **East Surrey MM**, Rye weekend also attended by **Greensleeves MM** and **Barnsley Longsword**.

I danced out with **Ashdown Forest MM** at West Hoathly. With **Broadwood MM** at the Haven near Horsham and with **Victory** at Compton near Portsmouth I also danced out with **Wantsum Morris Men** at Broadstairs folk week and, attended **Winchester's** annual feast in February.

13) Proposed change to the Constitution of the Morris Ring

Proposed: Stafford Morris

Seconded: Peterborough Morris

NEW PROPOSED CLAUSES

- A. All funds or assets of the Morris Ring shall be used only for the furtherance of its objectives and no such funds or assets shall be transferred to the Officers or member clubs of the Morris Ring for their personal use
- B. On the dissolution of the Morris Ring none of its funds or assets shall be transferred to its Officers or member clubs for their personal use and shall only be transferred to charitable or not-for-profit organisations having the same or similar objectives as the Morris Ring and an equivalent prohibition on personal use of funds or assets once transferred

14) Future Events Diary

2020

18 th April	JMO Day of Dance, Liverpool, organised by sides from the North West area of the Morris Ring
30 th – 31 st May	Thaxted Morris Weekend
31 st July – 2 nd August	St Albans Ring Meeting (362)

22 nd – 23 rd August	Saddleworth Rushcart Ring Meeting (363)
5 th – 6 th September	Plymouth Morris Mayflower Morris Muster Marine Ring Meeting (364)
26 th September	Peterborough Morris Cathedral City Day Ring Meeting (365)

2021

19 th June	Coventry City of Culture Day of Dance – open to all Morris Organisations
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15) Date and Venue of Next ARM

16) AOB

Items of Any Other Business to be submitted to the Bagman of the Ring by post or email before midnight on 6th March please; items submitted on the day will only be considered by exception and if time permits; this is not to include event announcements, as these should be published via the Bagman's Newsletter.