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**Newsletter No. 93**

**February 2015**

**ARM Special**  
**(Up-dated 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 2015)**

**Jon Melville: Bagman Elect.**



Subject to ratification at the ARM Jon Melville of Anker Morris Men will take over from me in the Spring. Following a 'handover' period I will 'dance out' and he will 'dance in' at the Thaxted meeting. I hope that you will be as supportive of him as you have of me over the past ten years.

**Page The highlights of Newsletter No.93 include:**

- 3 Programme for 2015 ARM
- 4 MR Squire: Adam Garland: 2015 Diary & Massed Dances for 2015
- 5 2015 JMO Day of Dance: 18<sup>th</sup> April in Bristol
- 6 **Youth Workshop Saturday 14 March** & MR Display Boards
- 7 MR Personal Accident Cover: Reminder & Morris Shop: Logo competition
- 8 Sadly Missed
- 11 Future events
- 13 Appendix 1: Morris Ring Annual Reps Meeting: Agenda (incl. Reports)
- 53 Appendix 2: The Committee of the Joint Morris Organisations:  
*Draft Statement of Purpose*

Greetings All

Included in this Newsletter as **Appendix 1** is the Agenda for the 2015 Morris Ring Annual Reps Meeting. An integral part of this agenda are the various reports from the Elected Officers (Squire; Bagman & Treasurer); the Area Reps and the people appointed to the various roles deemed necessary over time to make your Morris Ring serve its membership.

This is your opportunity to get involved in this umbrella body to which your side and 180 other sides are affiliated. As with all organisations the success of the Morris Ring is totally dependent upon the participation of its constituent members. If the Morris Ring is not serving your needs, if your side wants more than the provision of insurance cover, various publications and the opportunity to meet up with like-minded sides for days or weekends of Dance then the ARM is your opportunity to make the views of your side heard.

The purpose of publishing the various reports in advance of the ARM is to allow the wider membership of sides to read them and through that hold the authors of the various reports to account through your representative at the meeting or failing that through your Area Rep<sup>1</sup>. At the meeting while the reports will not be "read out" (it being taken that attendees will have read them in advance) their authors will highlight or expand on salient points and be available to answer your questions.

**Appendix 2** is a draft "Statement of Purpose" for the Committee of the Joint Morris Organisations. A constitution had been considered but this 'Statement' has been suggested and referred back to the Morris Ring, the Morris Federation & the Open Morris for discussion and hopefully approval.

If your side is unable to attend the ARM please record apologies with the MR Bagman via [bagman@themorrisring.org](mailto:bagman@themorrisring.org)

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<sup>1</sup> The area Reps for South East (Cliff Marchant) and North East (Brian Pollard) have tendered their apologies as they are unable to get to the ARM this year. If sides in these areas have any questions they wish to have asked, comments made or issues raised they can do so through the Bagman of the Morris Ring.

## Morris Ring 2015 Annual Reps Meeting

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March



We are only a couple of weeks away from the 2015 ARM. It is still not too late to apply. The venue is Oak Farm Hotel, Watling Street, Hatherton, Cannock, Staffs WS11 1SB (Handy for the M6). Please send **Application Forms**, along with cheques payable to **Uttoxeter Morris Men** to Bagman for the event: Mac McCoig at 8 Redhills, Eccleshall, Staffs. ST21 6JW or [mac.mccoig@btinternet.com](mailto:mac.mccoig@btinternet.com)

The Application Form is available on the Morris Ring website

<http://www.themorrisring.org/event/annual-representatives-meeting-2015>

Please address your application or questions concerning the 'housekeeping' side of the ARM to Mac McCoig, and questions concerning the business of the meeting or *apologies for non-attendance* to [bagman@themorrisring.org](mailto:bagman@themorrisring.org).

### Programme of the day:

9:30 - 10:30	Arrival	Tea & Coffee available	(Garden Room)
10:30 - 11:30	Workshop: Lichfield: Milley's Bequest		(Paddock Suite)
11:30 - 12:30	Area Meetings	Tea & Coffee Available	(Various venues)
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch		(Garden Room)
14:00 - 15:30	ARM		(Paddock Suite)
15:30	Tea & Coffee		(Garden Room)
16:00 - 16:30	Workshop: Lichfield (Barefooted Quaker)		(Paddock Suite)
16:00	Advisory Council		(Bistro)
16:30 - 18:00	Informal Dancing		(Paddock Suite)
19:00	Feast (in kit)		
00:30	Bar Closes		

## Morris Ring Squire's Diary 2015 is as follows:

- February 7th Leicester Feast
- February 8th JMO AGM
- W/E March 8th ARM
- W/E April 11th JMO Event with Rag Morris in Bristol
- May 2nd Westminster Day of Dance
- W/E 9th May Helmond Meeting of the MR
- May 16th Moulton Festival
- W/E May 30th Thaxted Meeting of the MR
- W/E June 27th Oakworth Village Weekend of dance
- W/E July 11th Hartley Meeting of the MR
- August 15th Mersey Meeting of the MR
- W/E August 22nd Saddleworth Meeting of the MR
- W/E September 5th Anker Meeting of the MR



## Squire's Massed Dances for 2015

Bampton	Rose Tree
	Maid of the Mill
Bledington	William and Nancy
	Young Collins
Brackley	Jockey to the Fair
Bucknell	Queen's Delight
Fieldtown	The Valentine
	Balance the Straw
Headington	Constant Billy
	Getting Upstairs
Lichfield	Vandals of Hammerwich

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## **JMO Day of Dance 2015: Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2015 10.00 - 17.00**

*Organised by Open Morris and Rag Morris, Bristol.*

The Morris Ring have been allocated space for 15 sides to attend this prestigious event. Morris Ring sides that want to attend need to let me know asap and certainly *\*before 21<sup>st</sup> February\** as I understand that the other organisations have filled their allocation and have a waiting list. *(Places are allocated in proportion so 33 Morris Federation sides, 15 Morris Ring sides and 12 Open Morris sides).*

**Programme for the Day:** Dancing at various dance spots within walking distance in Bristol during the day. All sides will be invited to get will get together briefly at the end of the afternoon for a very few massed dances. There will also be an opportunity to meet up later after the organised spots for music, singing and socialising.

Attendees are responsible for their own travel, accommodation and victualing so you manage all your own costs. Information on B&Bs, hotels, hostels, campsites etc., on rail links, park&ride etc. and on pubs etc. will be provided later to every side registered to attend. Further information can be found on <http://www.jmodayofdance.com/index.html>

MR sides that have registered their interest (as of 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 2015) are:

- Bristol Morris Men,
- Dolphin Morris
- Jockey Morris
- Letchworth Morris;
- Mendip Morris
- Peterborough Morris
- Ripley Morris;
- Westminster Morris
- Wyvern Jubilee

The MR Squire Adam Garland will be in attendance along with Jon Melville who will be there as musician for the Morris Federation Appalachian side First Class Stamp.

☞ If your side wishes to be added to this list please contact me ASAP.



## Youth Workshop **Saturday 14 March**

A Cotswold dance workshop for boys and young men under 18 is taking place on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March in Peterborough led by sometime Squire of the Morris Ring Mike Garland.

The workshop is aimed at youngsters who already have some Cotswold dance skills and who would like to improve their skills and extend their dance repertoire. There is no specific lower age limit but a parent will be expected to accompany a younger participant or appoint a responsible adult in their place.

The cost is £12 per person to include lunch and refreshments.

Bagmen are invited to contact the organiser Mike Stevens directly to nominate a participant.

Mike Stevens [mikestevenspe11@aol.com](mailto:mikestevenspe11@aol.com)

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## Morris Ring Display Boards

Are you making full use of this asset? If you have an opportunity to make use of one of the five sets we possess please contact your Area Rep. If you can use them even if a set is not currently in your area arrangements can be made to get a set to you!

Area Rep.: South West & Wales	Tim Sercombe	timothy.sercombe@gmail.com
Area Rep.: West Midlands	Pete Simpson	simpsonfam@live.com
Area Rep.: North Midlands	Ben Robinson	ben@packingtonmorris.org.uk
Area Rep.: South Midlands	Roger Comley	<i>No email address</i>
Area Rep.: South East	Cliff Marchant	cliffmarchant@btinternet.com

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**Michael Stimpson (JMO Insurance Guru)** asks that I remind all sides that:

1. You have until the 16th of March to get Personal Accident applications in for 10 months cover if you missed the January date.
2. Public Liability Insurance is included as part of your subs to the Morris Ring. In the event of a situation which MAY result in a claim, the Squire or Bagman of the side must let Michael know the details as soon as possible and if there are any non-

Side members who can provide evidence, it is important to get their name and telephone numbers AT THE TIME.

Michael Stimpson    [StimpsonM@aol.com](mailto:StimpsonM@aol.com)    PO Box 115, Rickmansworth,  
Herts. WD3 1WB  
Tel: 01923 770425    11.30am to 7pm Monday to Thursday and 11.30am to  
5pm Friday.

## The Morris Shop New Logo Competition

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### The Morris Shop

The Morris Shop is looking for a new logo for its website! This is your chance to win £20 to spend at [The Morris Shop](http://The Morris Shop). Enter via Facebook. Go to The Morris Shop and simply comment with your logo pic. The winner will be announced at the JMO day of dance at Bristol on the 18th April 2015.

The winning Logo will be used on our website, Facebook, receipts/invoices, compliment slips and Stall banners etc.

\*\*\*\*\* Please vote by clicking "Like" on submitted posts \*\*\*\*\*

Submitting your entry is to agree for the Morris Shop to use your design(s) freely as it sees fit.

The Morris Shop Shopkeeper (Shaun) has the final decision!

[www.themorrisshop.com](http://www.themorrisshop.com)    [shaun@themorrisshop.com](mailto:shaun@themorrisshop.com)



### **Message from John Burke re his mum Ellen Burke**

"As you may have been aware, my mother, Ellen, had not been well since February 2014, when she contracted shingles, which can be particularly debilitating. I regret to say that she passed away in her sleep between 5:30 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. on Sunday 18 January 2015, which is as she wished it. She was 92 and, despite her physical ailments, remained quite aware of her surroundings and cogent to the end.

Much to her annoyance and frustration, she had been in hospital and respite care on several occasions through the remainder of the year, and had been resident at the Longridge Care Home at Dunston, near Stafford, since September 2014. We had been visiting her as often as we were able, but a six-hour round trip from Hampshire has been difficult, and we have been very grateful to friends in Stafford, particularly Stella and Fred Waygood, for their frequent visits to Ellen.

John Burke. 83 Bodycoats Road, Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh, Hampshire SO53 2NP 023 8036 5024 07502 39 39 42 [john\\_burke@ntlworld.com](mailto:john_burke@ntlworld.com)



### **Ben Izard: Squire of the Spring Grove Morris Men**

"It is with great sadness, that I have to advise you that the Squire of Spring Grove Morris, Ben Izard, died on Sunday evening.

Ben, who was elected Squire in September 2014, became ill in November and was later diagnosed with Lymphoma for which treatment was about to start. Despite his illness he was determined to plan the year's events, which will go ahead as he planned.

Ben joined Spring Grove in 2008, and having learnt Morris, he was inspired to volunteer for, and took part in, the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games.

Ben was a great character and will missed by all of us. Our thoughts are with his wife, Toni, and his daughters."

**Phil Mundy**





"It is with sadness that we announce the death of Nic (Mike) Nicolson, Nic who had been suffering with cancer for several months and died peacefully at home on Wednesday 4th February.

Nic had been a member of St Albans Morris Men for many years and had been both Squire and Foreman recently. He served as Overseas Bagman of the Morris Ring for a number of years

He first started dancing with a boys' side in Coventry and since then has danced with many sides. His job in civil engineering took him all over the world and whenever possible he danced with a local side wherever he was. He will be missed and our condolences go out to his family. "

Trevor Adams, Squire St Albans Morris Men

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It is with deep regret that I have to tell you that Brian Bisp passed away on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015 in Poole General Hospital where he had been for the last ten days or so.

Brian was of course a past bagman of Bourne River Morris Men, a member of Stourvale Mummers, and the founder and organiser of the original Wimborne Folk Festival for some 32 years. I'm sure many will remember him in top hat and tailcoat organising the dance sides at Wimborne (and still doing the same in later years from his mobility scooter). He will be missed but not forgotten.

*Geoff Knapman* Bagman: Bourne River Morris Men

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### **Children in Need.**

Final call for the three Morris Organisations' charity is BBC Children in Need.

A reminder of the bank details for donations to the JMO Charity Appeal:

Sort Code: 40 - 41 - 44

Account number 01729780 (HSBC)

## MORRIS RING PUBLICATIONS

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The latest edition of **The Morris Dancer** is available for download

<http://www.themorrisring.org/publications/morris-dancer>

### ☺ On-line Links:



The main MR website with millions of pages stuffed to the gunnels with all you need to know about the MR:

<http://www.themorrisring.org/>

Follow the latest media reports concerning Morris Matters at

<http://www.themorrisring.org/article/morris-matters>

The Morris Ring Google Group (MRGG). Private Forum for debate or announcements.

*Contact Morris Ring Bagman to register to use.*

<http://groups.google.com/group/the-morris-ring?hl=en&pli=1>

Morris Ring Facebook site: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Morris-Ring/158759257502840>

Morris Ring Twitter: <http://twitter.com/#!/TheMorrisRing>



## Future Events:

### 2015

Sat 18<sup>th</sup> April    **JMO National Day of Dance** in Bristol

Hosted by Rag Morris of Open Morris

8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> May    344 **Helmond 80th Anniversary Ring Meeting**

29<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> May    345 **Thaxted Morris Meeting**

For more information contact [iandbanderson@btinternet.com](mailto:iandbanderson@btinternet.com)

10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> July    **346 Hartley Meeting** Inc. JMO Regional Day of Dance

*One day low cost meeting based on Rugby Club Beer Festival.*

*Accommodation available*

Venue: Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Club

Sat 15<sup>th</sup> August    **347 Mersey MM** One-Day Meeting based in Liverpool

City Centre (Day of Dance format: day time only, no feast, no accommodation.)

21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> August    **348 Saddleworth Rushcart**

Pay as you go event. Limited accommodation available. No centrally organised food. No feast.

Email: [saddleworthmorris@gmail.com](mailto:saddleworthmorris@gmail.com)

4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> Sept    **349 Anker Morris' 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Sat 3<sup>rd</sup> October    **2015 SDU Longsword Tournament**

"With dance locations around the picturesque village with the final showcase being held in the Village Hall you have the choice of exhibiting or competing, dancing your own dance or traditional." Hosted by The Goathland Plough Stots for the Sword Dance Union. For further information please contact

[john.atkinson@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:john.atkinson@yahoo.co.uk) or [goathlandlongsword@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:goathlandlongsword@yahoo.co.uk)

### 2016

March                    **ARM** Hosted by TBA

3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> June    **Thaxted Morris Meeting**

8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> July **Greensleeves MM 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

(Based in Chipperfield)



The weekend starts on Chipperfield Common at 9:00 pm when Greensleeves dance around the tree planted by them in memory of Leslie Nichols, former Squire and former Squire of the Morris Ring.

For more information contact  
the bagman@greensleevesmorris.org.uk or go to the  
Greensleeves website

**2017**

March  
TBC

**ARM Hosted by TBA**  
**Thaxted Morris Meeting**



And finally.....

Alan Seymour reported on the MR Google Group that he had "just been to The Swan, Stratford upon Avon, a rare chance to see "The Shoemakers Holiday" by Thomas Dekker, c1590, a play with Morris dancing, it's on 'till 7th March, it was excellent."

I hope to see many of you at the ARM next month or at Thaxted when I dance out as Bagman. Please keep your information and news flowing in to [bagman@themorrisring.org](mailto:bagman@themorrisring.org) so that Jon has something to include his Newsletters.

Thank you.



Bagman of the Morris Ring

## Appendix 1: AGENDA for 2015 ARM

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the ARM 2014 (Circulated with Newsletter No. 89 April 2014)
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
4. **Squire's Report:** Adam Garland

The Squire's Capers in *The Circular* detail the places I have been and the events I have had the pleasure of attending so I shall not be going over these again here.

There are, however, a number of items which I feel should be noted. The respective reports will go into greater detail where relevant but I would just like to make the following comments.

The Morris Ring Archive is currently being investigated with a view to turning it into something more usable from a public point of view. Chris Wildridge has the bit between his teeth and is embroiled in unravelling the items we have.

The difficulty as I see it, is understanding exactly what makes an archive. There are numerous collections of material located around the country and I would guess that all Sides have a collection of ring-bound folders, the odd photo album, perhaps old bell pads and hats, and a tankard or two tucked away in someone's attic, but it is not necessarily an archive in its current form. I look forward to Chris' findings and to hear how he thinks it can be developed to become a fully useable resource.

Nigel Strudwick is our Overseas Bagman, and I have had a discussion with him on what this actually means. In my experience Morris Dancing is well received outside the British Isles and I know of many Sides who have had spectacular experiences abroad. It would be nice if we could all work together in creating a communal resource that Clubs can use to find out about foreign teams, events, or countries where they would be welcome. Nigel's report should go into this in more depth.

Shaun Lambley has taken the Morris Shop by the scruff of its neck and has made a superb job of making it his own; I whole-heartedly support Shaun's desire to make The Morris Shop a stand-alone unit.



The shop already attends many non-Ring events, and indeed, non-Morris events, and the more this can be encouraged the better. Anything we can do to bring Morris into the minds of the wider public is a good thing in my opinion.

Recruitment is obviously a hot topic at present and with this in mind I have started a little project of my own to look at different methods Clubs have used which have been successful in bringing in new members. Obviously, there is no panacea in this regard; one size does not fit all, but if I can build on Peter Halfpenney's work currently on the Ring website, between us we may give Clubs ideas on how to go about recruiting which may not have been tried before.

Control of the JMO has now passed to the Open Morris and at the recent JMO meeting we discussed numerous aspects of the Morris Dancing world. We decided that the JMO could perform more efficiently without the hassle of bureaucracy waffle. In this regard it was decided that the JMO should not have a constitution in its own right but should have an official statement of purpose.

The annual JMO day of dance will continue, and all clubs can now run events under the JMO name as and when they want. When the final wording has been agreed I shall send the Statement and its accompanying terms of reference to Peter to create a link from our website.

We have removed all the spurious ideas such as a stand-alone JMO website, facebook page, leaflets and so forth; all members of the three Organisations can advertise JMO items through their own media, or their organisations newsletters/circulars.

The JMO also decided that the idea of having a single chosen charity for the whole country had run its course. In future the host club of a JMO event can choose a charity if they wish and all profits would be donated to that cause. This allows clubs to support local causes if desired.

Something else that was discussed at the JMO meeting is the idea of taking the Cotswold Jigs Instructional round the regions and opening it up to the other organisations. This requires people to organise the weekend but Geoff Terram has agreed to provide the tutors and music.

At the ARM last year it was decided that instructionals would be left for individual teams to arrange. This is OK, but there is always a lack of volunteers to run these even when Sides do express an interest in learning something. These events do not have to be run by a single Side; they can just as easily be arranged by a group of like-minded individuals from different Sides. I propose to set up a database of individuals who are happy to host or organise instructionals. If this is you, please email me your name, contacts, what you are prepared to do; organise, play music, cook, be a tutor etc., and whether you are willing to travel and if so how far.

During the first few months of my tenure, I have had the pleasure of attending many excellent events and seen some top quality dancing. Unfortunately I have also seen the occasional dance where the quality has been less than I know the Sides in question can produce.

Yes, we all have bad days at times; I understand this, and this is the good thing about the winter practice season; it allows us time to go over our traditions, make sure we know figures, where our hands are supposed to be, which foot we start on, getting those lines straight and so forth.

As a final point, I have received a few comments regarding the format of the ARM this year, and the fact that it is a shortened event. Here I was stuck between the proverbial rock and hard-place. Either, I could have agreed to the full weekend but the costs per man would have been huge, or, we keep the costs down by running a shortened event. In the end I went for the latter but I do understand why this has created a little frustration.

My difficulty is, even though numerous requests for a host/organiser were sent out in the Newsletter and Circulars, after a little persuasion we only received one offer to host it. If I only get one offer, I have to accept that offer and we have to make decisions re the format, venue, and accommodation thereafter.

I would therefore make a plea. If you know you have a suitable venue in your area which can cope with the full weekend, and retain a relatively low cost, do not be shy in coming forward to host or organise it. As I said above, it doesn't need to be a single Club effort; a group of individuals, or a few Sides pulling together would be perfectly acceptable.

I would finish by offering my thanks to all involved with running the events I have enjoyed and look forward to many more over my remaining time as your Squire

Galley Right

## 5. Bagman's Report: Charlie Corcoran

Ten years have passed very quickly. It has been an interesting decade for the Morris Ring in which some things have changed whilst much remains constant. Several Area Reps on the Advisory Council both predate and survive my tenure as Bagman. It has been an honour to be part of the MR 'civil service'. I have worked with a sound set of Treasurers, including the incomparable Steve BfB Adamson, and an interesting set of Squires. As with any post holder in any organisation I have received support from the majority of our membership and criticism from a few.

At my first ARM as Bagman we remembered, in silence, Nibs Matthews, past Squire of the Morris Ring, a true gent. His was only the first of numerous deaths I have had to report - many being of personal friends made over my 50+ years in the Morris. While it would be impossible and certainly inappropriate to name them all I must mention two:

**John Maher** Overseas Bagman and webmaster for many years. I am certain that Martin Jones and Pete DeCourcy will not mind me saying that John laid the foundations for the wonderful website that makes our lives so much easier today. When I took over from John Frearson, another wonderful servant of the MR, snail mail telephone dominated the job - seldom was a meal eaten in peace. Exclamations of "That bl\*\*dy phone" were the precursor of many a cold, or at least microwave-warmed, meal. Enquiries about this, requests for that, are now mainly via email and in most cases easily answered by a pointer to this or that page on the MR website. Now even the majority of 'Find a side' requests are dealt with through the website rather than through referral to the appropriate Area Reps. While the various MR Google Groups have not proved as helpful in improving communications across the MR as I had hoped there is little doubt that Facebook or something similar is the way forward.

In 2005 the cost of MR membership was £45. The fact that ten years on it has only risen by £5 is in a large part down to the late **Steve BfB Adamson**. His hard astute financial stewardship and timeless efforts in developing the Morris Shop, along with his vision of 'essential MR business' enabling our expenditure to be reined in, ensured our financial survival as our membership has decreased. Although not popular with all, he was not one of the world's diplomat and perhaps could harbour a grudge, he was a real support to me and good friend. Goodness he worked hard - frequently into the early hours. Many of us have had phone calls at one or two o'clock in the morning when he simply forgot how late it was. We must remember that the whole Morris community is indebted to him, for example for persuading Pressed Metal Products to re-tool (so that they could continue to provide the Morris world with bells) and for the work that he did with Mike Chandler to digitise the Letchworth Tapes.

**Six squires.** All very different, each with their own set of skills, but all dedicated to doing the very best for our Morris Ring in a changing world. While the acceptance, grudgingly by a few, of female musicians is the most obvious development there have been many other challenges. The improved cooperation between the three Morris umbrella groups is outstanding in the face of licencing, processing, and media 'difficulties' has really helped. Each organisation has its own distinct character and ethos so we are not really in competition for member sides but I suspect that this might change when the Morris Ring finally admits sides regardless of their gender makeup. This is not meant to be contentious but we need to remember the doom-mongering of the tiny number of pessimists surrounding female musicians has come to nothing. The membership of individual sides is up to them and no one else. I here would like to record my thanks to the officers of the Morris Federation and the Open Morris as we have striven remove barriers and to de-bunk many of the myths and prejudices from the 1970s and 80s.

Ten years ago I reported on the then new format for the **Newsletter** - A5 to reduce postage costs (*I had no inkling as to how expensive postage was going to become*) and explained that I had divided the existing Ring Directory in a new 'electronic' Handbook and an excel spreadsheet Contact List. This was a vain attempt to ensure that they were both up-to-date. The former was rendered obsolete by the internet and the latter is now maintained by Steven because if

revised contact data is provided by the sides it is now submitted as part of the membership / subscription process. I also offered help and advisory documents on Child Protection; the organisation of Ring Meetings, Instructionals and ARMs; Risk Assessments and even side Constitutions. These are still available, even if not in printed form, but seldom requested.

I can report that in the past 12 months there have been five Newsletters and that while great savings have been made as an increasing number of sides (& individuals) have opted not to receive the printed edition following staff changes at my previous place of employment printing costs are increasing.

Notice I have called them 'Ring' Meetings. Following the various equal opportunities stuff that lead to the amendments to the MR constitution and the transfer of responsibility for selecting attendees at these 'Morris Ring sponsored meetings' away from the MR onto the host side I was told that I should call them 'Meetings hosted under the auspices of the Morris Ring' or something similar. However common usage prevailed. I would like to thank all sides who have hosted meetings over the past decade - an appeal to others to consider so-doing. I will add that what should be a relatively simple organisation task is sometimes vastly complicated by the inability of many individuals (I will not blame whole sides or their Bagmen) to make or keep a commitment. Booking buses, organising catering and even ordering beer for some of these events when people will not confirm numbers with their Bagman has given substance to concepts such as herding cats and plating fog. Ring Meetings are not as important to the wider membership as they once were - thanks to the great proliferation of Day and Weekends of Dance. The cost of such events has escalated and sides hosting them have had to work much harder to attract customers, to sell their event, and attendance figures at recent meetings mirror the relative success of such efforts.

As the Bagman of Leicester Morris as well as Bagman of the MR I must record my thanks to my fellow Bagmen - now of both genders (I am told I cannot call them 'bag-ladies'). Those of you who have never undertaken the role have little idea how frustrating it can be to try to organise something when the masses have agreed to do it but then don't commit, or in many cases don't answer emails or the phone, and then complain when the event or booking is cancelled or turned down "I was looking forward to that". So all non-bagmen - respect your



Bagman - and always be ready to show your appreciation of what they do for your side by offering to buy him (or her) a pint.

I also would like to mention those sides that do organise their own weekends. Leicester Morris annually attend the Forest of Dean MM Family Weekend; the Leeds Morris Dales Weekend; the Whittlesea Straw Bear and the Lobster Potties Festival in Sherringham as well as various one-offs. Increasingly these involve sides drawn from both the Open Morris and the Morris Federation - and it is many a year since I have encountered any problems - we are all simply Morris dancers.

I conclude by thanking my current fellow officers. Steven has that attributes that I believe any treasurer of the MR requires: a sound financial brain, a sense of humour and he can proof read. I don't know Adam that well but I am certain that under his leadership the MR is in safe hands especially as after the Thaxted meeting he will be able supported by Jon, his brother-in-Law.

## **6. Treasurer's Report:      Steven Archer**

One activity has dominated the financial results more than anything else this year - the shop. Shaun re-launched the shop just before Christmas 2013 at the Mendip Ale in an atmosphere of great hope but also uncertainty. The 2014 Mendip Ale was Shaun's 17th outing of the year, having covered all the hosted meetings, the JMO day, festivals, days of dance and ales throughout the country. He has created and launched a new website for the shop with PayPal and credit card facilities and tirelessly despatched all the online sales. This huge effort has transformed the fortunes of the shop, increasing sales by 25%, returning a surplus and reducing stock levels. Last year we made a provision in the accounts against the slow moving stock as we were concerned that it could not be sold. This put the shop deep into the red last year. Shaun has proved that the stock can be sold and so the provision has been reversed this year. This shows up in the figures as a substantial one-off profit.

Although we made a small operating deficit this year (subject to audit) the shop performance has boosted our funds and so once again I have no plans to propose a subscription increase.

The Youth Fund started the year with £800 but with our continued support of the Young Dancers project and the EFDSS More and Better Morris initiative, this fell to just £200. However your generosity has now boosted this fund to over £1,500, enabling us to continue to support youth Morris.

Unfortunately last year's upward trend in membership has not continued and this year we have lost 4 sides at renewal. City of Gloucester Mummers and Black Prince Morris Men of Truro both folded due to lack of numbers. Stevenage Sword Dancers went mixed and joined the Open Morris and Horwich Prize Medal Morris Men also went mixed and joined the Morris Federation. Having known Horwich for many years I know that this was a very difficult decision for them but they felt that it was the only way forward for them. This pattern of events is likely to play out again in future years. We are working to encourage more youth into the Morris which may help with part of this problem but the other issue will no doubt be the subject of much discussion throughout the Morris Ring.

There will be a further report to the ARM after the accounts have been approved by the Auditor

## **7. Chair of Advisory Council's Report: Robin Springett**

I took over as Chair on 7 September from my very active predecessor Peter Halfpenny, and held an Advisory Council meeting on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October. The Squire of The Morris Ring Adam Garland had not asked for any specific advice; however, the meeting was successful and a wide range of subjects concerning Morris in general and The Morris Ring in particular were discussed.

Most significant was discussion concerning the problems associated with the control of traffic and closing of roads. Of course this affects the three Morris Organisations, but seems to be worse with the Ring. Perhaps our long history and our prominence in many towns and cities is to blame. In particular we shut roads for the Nutters, Thaxted and Saddleworth, amongst others every year. This is yet to be resolved.

The Bagman organised a nice lunch, and after saying our goodbyes, the South West and Wales Representative and I left to drive back to Devon.

The next AC meeting will coincide with the ARM on 7<sup>th</sup> March in Cannock.

Robin Springett Immediate Past Squire of The Morris Ring.  
Chair of the Advisory Council

### **JMO Annual Report from the Chair for 2014**

At the Annual Meeting in February 2014, I took over as chair of the JMO for 2014. This is largely a figurehead role, as all decisions for the coming year are made at the Annual Meeting by the representatives of the 3 Morris organisations; where necessary referred to their membership. JMO custom and practice ensures that the titular head is the elected head of the Morris organisation which is hosting the Day of Dance (DoD) that calendar year.

Discussion was of common interest items such as insurance, JMO DoD and the JMO Charity of choice. Also discussed was the possibility of the JMO having a presence on the internet; the problems associated with the withdrawal of police support for road closures, and regional Days of Dance.

**Insurance.** The insurance scheme continues to be good value for money and well supported.

**Road Closures and the Morris.** This came to a head with the annual Britannia Coconut Dancers Easter extravaganza. In the event, the day went ahead with money provided by local councillors to support a private company to control traffic. It was very safe, but some local disruption, especially to public transport, occurred. In my opinion, it could have been done in just as safe a manner, but with fewer operatives, and with less disruption. This subject is far from resolved.

**JMO DoD.** This was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May in Cambridge hosted by the Cambridge Morris Men on behalf of the Morris Ring. It was incredibly well supported, with 66 sides being represented. Naturally enough, organising dancing spots for so many sides was not easy, and there were problems on the day at some of the spots and with buskers; but overall, the day built on the work done in Exeter the previous year and was an incredible success,

with the dancers, the public and the city authorities. Cambridge MM were very disciplined with organising collecting and a record sum was declared available for the JMO charity. The day ended with a display of massed and show dances on Parker's Piece. I must say that I had a brilliant time; (sadly having to leave after the massed display for a dinner on board HMS Belfast).

**JMO Charity Children in Need.** A presentation was made to Pudsey during 2014. Collections continued slowly throughout the year. If it is the intention to continue with this charity, then more publicity is required to keep it in the mind of Morris sides.

**JMO Internet Presence.** The value of having an internet presence was discussed and I researched having a page on the UK Morris Dancers website controlled by Alan Morley, which was agreed by Alan in principle, and if it is still the intention, then this needs to be taken forward. I also started a JMO Facebook page which has had teething problems, but continues to be quite well supported. I will give editing authority to anyone who wants it from the officers of our organisations.

**Use of JMO for Regional and local Days of Dance.** At the 2014 JMO Annual Meeting, the use of the JMO soubriquet for sub-national events was discussed and, at the time, no objections were raised, and no discussion was had regarding how sides would be selected, as it was assumed that all Morris sides in an area would be invited, and using the JMO banner for a DoD would raise the organisation's profile. A successful "Regional" JMO event was organised by Shakespeare MM in Warwick on the 17<sup>th</sup> May. A similar event organised by Hartley MM later in the year ran into problems over the ratio of sides attending. However, Dartington MM re-badged their DoD as "South Devon Regional JMO Day of Dance" and held a successful event, with all local sides invited, which they intend to repeat this year. For my part, I think we can become too bureaucratic. We should welcome that sides want to reach out to their local Morris teams and if a DoD or instructional is open to all, without exception in a county or region, then badging it JMO has to be good; more so if they collect and pay monies into the JMO charity! My personal opinion is that the ratio of sides by Morris organisations is only appropriate for national JMO events, and does not need to be carried forward to local

events. I appreciate that this discussion is not finished, but there is an opportunity here to improve the image of the Morris in general; both the Ring and Open seem happy, and a way needs to be found to bring the Fed on board!

I am delighted to hand over the Chair for 2015 from The Morris Ring to The Open Morris, and look forward to an excellent day in Bristol on the 18<sup>th</sup> May. I offer my apologies for non-attendance at the Annual meeting, and hope you have a successful day.

Robin Springett Chair Joint Morris Organisation for 2014  
30<sup>th</sup> January 2015

**8. Archival Reports:** Chair of Archive Committee: Chris Wildridge *on behalf of Geoff Douglas (Paper); Duncan Broomhead (Photographic); Ron Shuttleworth (Mumming); Andy Padmore (Sound) and Lester Bailey (New Dance Collator)*. The post of Sword Archivist remains vacant.

## Introduction

This report reflects a period of transition. Chris Metherell resigned from the position of Chairman and I took on the role in October 2014. I would like to publicly thank Chris Metherell and ask that his contribution to the development of the Archive be formally recognised. I prepared a paper for the Squire setting out my approach to some issues surrounding the various components of the Morris Ring Archive. This was put to the ARM meeting in October.

## Activities

Since the 2014 report prepared by Chris Metherell the following progress has been made:

### Contribution by Duncan Broomhead:

*"Richard Broughton of the Bampton Morris Dancers and Charlbury Morris Men. Richard has now completed the massive task of digitising and cataloguing the Arnold Woodley Collection. Considerable work remains to index the material. This material will shortly be passed to Geoff Douglas. During the past year 139 separate e-mail enquiries relating to archival*



*photographs were received. To gain a wider audience photographs are being posted on the 'How many Morris Dancers are on Facebook?' site."*

**Contribution by Ron Shuttleworth:**

*"For once, I have something really significant to tell you! Last year I reported the possibility that someone else might take on the paper after me. Sadly this did not materialise, so I was back to square one and the future looked really bleak.*

*Then, in the Autumn, Doctor Paul Smith, Professor of Folklore at the Memorial University in St John's, Newfoundland, suggested that I contact Ms Jacky Hodgson, Director of the Special Collections Department at the University of Sheffield which already housed what was left of the records of the defunct National Centre for English Cultural Traditions. She visited Coventry, liked what she saw, and offered a permanent home to the Paper Collection!*

*This posed a problem, as it all technically belonged to the Morris Ring. However, in light of the problems our Main Archive is having in finding a place for permanent storage, it seemed to me to be too good an offer to refuse. Your Squire and the other Officers concurred, so negotiations went ahead and an acceptable form of contract has been agreed which will give the Morris Ring joint rights.*

*The public have free access to the Special Collections, so any of you will be able to see it there. I will continue to develop and expand the Digital Collection, copies of which will be made available to the Ring and to the University, updated as required.*

*Since then I have been fully occupied in getting everything into good order for final transfer. I have been astonished at how much there is to do and how difficult some of it is. But, as I said to Ms Hodgson, if I find it confusing, what chance would anyone else have, coming to it 'cold'. It's nearly done now and I reckon about another month (hopefully) should see it ready to go.*

*On a general point, I think that there is a lesson here for anyone with papers they would like to see eventually lodged in an institution. I suspect*

*that the clincher for acceptance was the fact that I had everything in good order and properly itemised and recorded in a database, so the work required of the University is minimal.*

*As for the rest, I again attended the Mummers' Festival and its Symposium, in Gloucester, where I was able to help a number of people and made several new contacts.*

*One of these is Yu Kai-liang ('Kent') who is a visiting scholar at the Dance Department at the University of Roehampton, and a PhD Candidate at the Dance Department at the Graduate School of China's National Arts Academy. Somewhat surprisingly, he is studying English Sword-dancing. I have inundated him with material and undertaken to put his written work into sound idiomatic English.*

*Otherwise, material continues to dribble in - my thanks to all contributors - keep it coming, and all enquiries have been dealt with."*

The Archive Group has not met as a body and while contact by phone and email is a fact of life today, face to face meetings, as at the ARM remain an important aspect of human interaction.

Details of various archive components, lists, databases etc. have been passed to me. A number of files have been supplied, some of them in legacy formats which may be inaccessible with current versions of the software. Ways of converting those files will be identified.

Recent newspaper reports highlighted the issue of difficulties inherent in digital formats for archives with cutting edge technology becoming beset by legacy issues within relatively short periods of time. This affects all forms of archival preservation. Using established bodies, e.g. universities and public record offices may minimise these difficulties.

In December I met with Laura Smyth [the new Director of Library and Archives at Cecil Sharp House] and Steve Roud to discuss the indexing of traditional dance.

Since October I have made contact with my equivalents in the Morris Federation and Open Morris to discuss a common approach to tracing

material on traditional dance. I've also been in touch with a number of other traditional dance organisations to explore similar themes.

### **Morris Ring Archive, Essex Record Office**

In February I visited the Essex Record Office at Chelmsford to examine the deposited MR Archive and to discuss its cataloguing with an archivist. A recommendation has been made to the Squire. The archivist has suggested a method of re-structuring the material in the archive to reflect standard archival cataloguing practice for materials deposited by societies. This would collate formal documents, correspondence, etc into a coherent collection whilst allowing flexibility in other areas. By adopting this suggestion the staff at the Essex Record Office would then be in a position to schedule the full cataloguing of the archive.

D/Z 571/1	Administration - minutes, constitution
D/Z 571/2	Finance - annual accounts etc
D/Z 571/3	Squire - correspondence
D/Z 571/4	Bagman - correspondence
D/Z 571/5	Treasurer - correspondence
D/Z 571/6	Other officers of the Morris Ring (as necessary, later categories to be renumbered to take account of this)
D/Z 571/7	Correspondence - arranged by person, then chronologically
D/Z 571/8	Morris sides - arranged alphabetically by place
D/Z 571/9	Music - including singers, musicians
D/Z 571/10	Dances - including notation
D/Z 571/11	Recordings - sound, video
D/Z 571/12	Photographs
D/Z 571/13	Programmes - arranged by year
D/Z 572/14-	Other categories can be added as necessary

This is not a hard and fast arrangement but can be used as a basis for developing a hierarchy within the Morris Ring Archive.

**Keeper of the Morris Ring Scrapbook:** Cliff Marchant

Although I have the Scrap books 3 (Keith still has the most up-to-date one) I do wonder what I have them for! Can they not join the archives as nothing has been added to them: all is now kept on disc The Morris Ring and Thaxted Morris have had notable "birthdays" over the last 2/3 years, but nothing has been submitted for the Morris Ring scrap books. Do we still need scrapbooks?

**Keeper of the Morris Ring Log Book:** Charlie Corcoran

As previously reported the first eight books of the Log Book have been digitised and these volumes will be handed over for storage in Essex, at the ARM. When time permits I plan to get the rest digitised but more recent volumes are a mass of separate sheets and a degree of sorting is required. I need to point out:

- Over the years there has been a degree of confusion as some 'minutes of meetings' are included within the 'Log' while others are recorded in separate Minute Books.
- The Log Book is easily confused with the separate Scrapbook. The **logbook** is a record of important events in the management, operation, and event of the Morris Ring. It can only contain reports, information and anecdotes about the various meetings if I receive them even if I am there as I cannot be everywhere! This is not simply up to the Host side - attendees can also pass 'stuff' on.

### **Publication Officers Reports:**

- a. **Editor Morris Ring Circular:** *Tony Foard* (Mersey Morris Men & Chester City Morris Men)

The *Morris Ring Circular* is published in both electronic and conventionally printed formats, and I aim to produce up to three issues a year. The *MRC* focuses on recent events in the Morris Ring community, seeking to celebrate, in words and pictures, the activities of member sides by (*inter alia*):

- reporting their recent involvement in local, national and international events;

- featuring their important anniversaries;
- publishing original commentary on matters of immediate interest;
- reflecting upon the lives and accomplishments of memorable individuals.

Since my last report the *MRC* has been through what my colleague Mac McCoig has pithily identified as the editorial curse of "feast or famine" - the abundance or scarcity of contributions. The well was dry during the spring and summer (when, quite rightly, we're all busy with the chief purpose of our chosen "trade" and intent on getting our shoes dusty); happily I was inundated with sufficient material in the autumn to make possible what was effectively a double issue edition of the *MRC*, distributed in October.

I continue to liaise with the aforementioned Mr McCoig, Editor of the *Morris Dancer*, to lessen the chances of articles being placed in an inappropriate publication, and though we might (rarely) bicker about ownership of the odd item, we agree on the vast majority and share plans so that clangers shall not be dropped. I am, in addition, keen to include in the *MRC* occasional appetite-whetters for the *Morris Dancer* when our respective publication dates favour this approach. (If you're not sure to which publication you should send your piece, be assured that the editors, between them, will identify the appropriate outlet for your talents.)

Last year I raised the matter of the *MRC's* printed format and its sustainability, given the increasingly heavy postage costs associated with each issue. I am in the early stages of drawing up proposals which I hope will secure the physical integrity of the publication as well as exploiting the advantages of the digital life- not least maximising value and reducing overheads. Of these notions, more anon.

Please keep submitting those photographs and articles! Grateful thanks to all who have done so.

b. **Editor Morris Dancer:** Mac McCoig

2014 saw two issues of The Morris Dancer: Volume 5, Numbers 2 and 3. Contributors included Rod Stradling, Andy Padmore, Bob Hine, Julian Whybra and Stephen Earwicker. I have also started serialising some previously



unpublished papers on the Cambridge Morris Men written by the late Roy Judge.

The Morris Dancer would not exist without the hard work of the contributors and a heartfelt thank you goes to all those mentioned above. They have produced some very interesting material which has genuinely expanded our knowledge of the Morris and its surrounding traditions. A deeper understanding of our tradition enriches our experience of the performance, setting the dances in a cultural and historical context.

I am always on the lookout for new material and so once again I am appealing to you to get your pencils, pads and pcs out and get writing that article on that nugget of history you always wanted to put into print.

The next issue is scheduled for March 2015, but this always depends on what I have available to include in the issue. Please contact me if you want to discuss any ideas you may have.

c. Social Network Coordinator's Report: Olli King

No report received

## 9. Overseas Bagman's Report

I really am an overseas bagman. Yet again I have to submit my apologies for failing to be present at the ARM. There is not a huge amount to report, again, so apologies for the brevity.

### Role of the Overseas Bagman

I have very much been feeling that the job of Overseas Bagman is a role desperately looking for a function, a character in search of an author. This year, our new Squire has been in touch with a few ideas as to what the OB might do. We have agreed the following:

I will compile a list of where sides have been recently to act as the basis of a foreign info database. On the same basis, I will ask those same sides whether they have any contact points abroad which might be useful for a team planning on going on a similar trip. I already keep a list of regular overseas festivals of which I hear, and I will try and supplement that.

To achieve that aim, I will send a round-robin to all clubs, both via the Ring Google list and also by inserting a note in a forthcoming newsletter. Please co-operate with the request as much as you can.

**Insurance reminder** Clubs with any queries about insurance, whether liability, personal or for things like taking our sorts of equipment abroad, should in the first place contact Michael Stimpson. He is rightly very insistent on having anything to do with Ring insurance issues, and for that reason might be to send any queries to him. I did that recently with the one enquiry I had this year.

Michael's summary is roughly this: UK Sides, including those in the Channel Islands, are insured worldwide except North America which requires additional cover. Non UK sides are not covered by the policy at all. He should be contacted with any queries, however ([stimpsonm@aol.com](mailto:stimpsonm@aol.com)).

**Clubs** I have not heard much from the handful of overseas clubs. Pinewoods MM in Massachusetts did visit the UK in late June as part of their 50th anniversary celebration. I was able to meet Martin Graetz ([jmgraetz@ttwriter.com](mailto:jmgraetz@ttwriter.com)) therefrom at Thaxted last year. I am aware that this year Perth MM are planning to dance in at Thaxted.

I'd like to thank Adam Garland for getting in touch, and thank Charlie Corcoran for all he has done for the Ring over the years, now that he is dancing off into the sunset...

**10. Web Editor's Report** Peter DeCourcy (perhaps better known as Kennet's Fool)

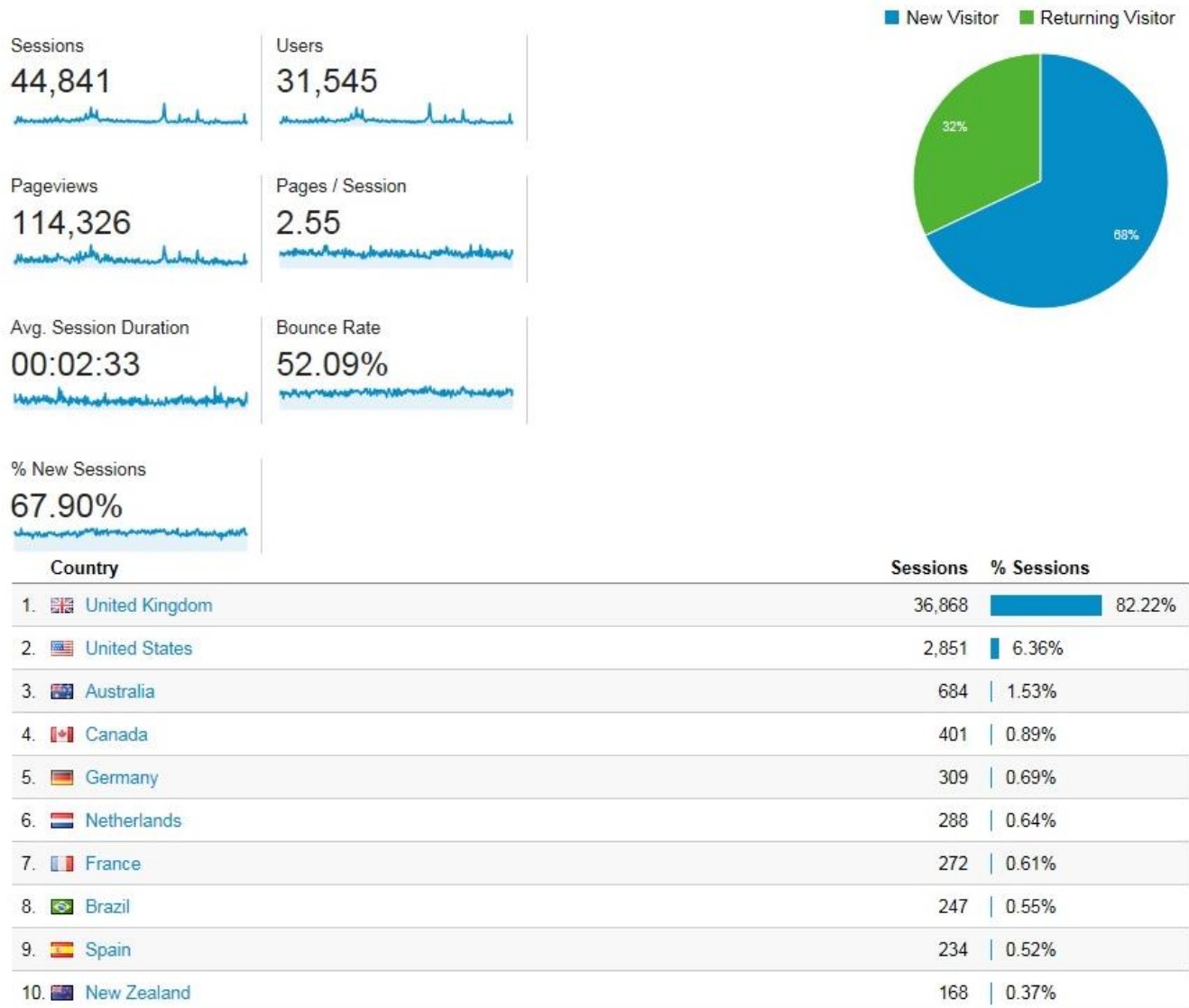
It has been another successful year for the website, if visitor statistics are anything to go by. Our user numbers are up by 30% and the number of sessions has increased by over 20% since 2013. This is despite transferring the Morris Shop activity from the web site to Shaun's own pages. I have continued the policy of "gentle change", by improving pages, some layouts and navigation, publishing relevant news and keeping the content up to date.

The Morris Matters news summary is the only really new feature, which seems to have been well received, although the Traditional Events pages have been reworked considerably. (Are your events included?). These are now accessible

from the front page as is our "Find A Side" service. Keeping that up-to-date is a real labour of love with nearly a hundred changes though the year using details shared between myself, Steve Archer and Charlie Corcoran. We have introduced a standard e-mail feedback to side contacts enabling them to check and approve any changes made.

A couple of technical issues outside our control were quickly solved by Martin Jones of Natty Web Development (and Dartington Morris) and, as always, he has been very helpful in adding the new system tweaks and features I've suggested. My target of making updates within 48 hours of receiving them, holidays and weekends of dance permitting, has been maintained by and large.

The following metrics give some idea of the successful reach of our pages for the calendar year 2014.



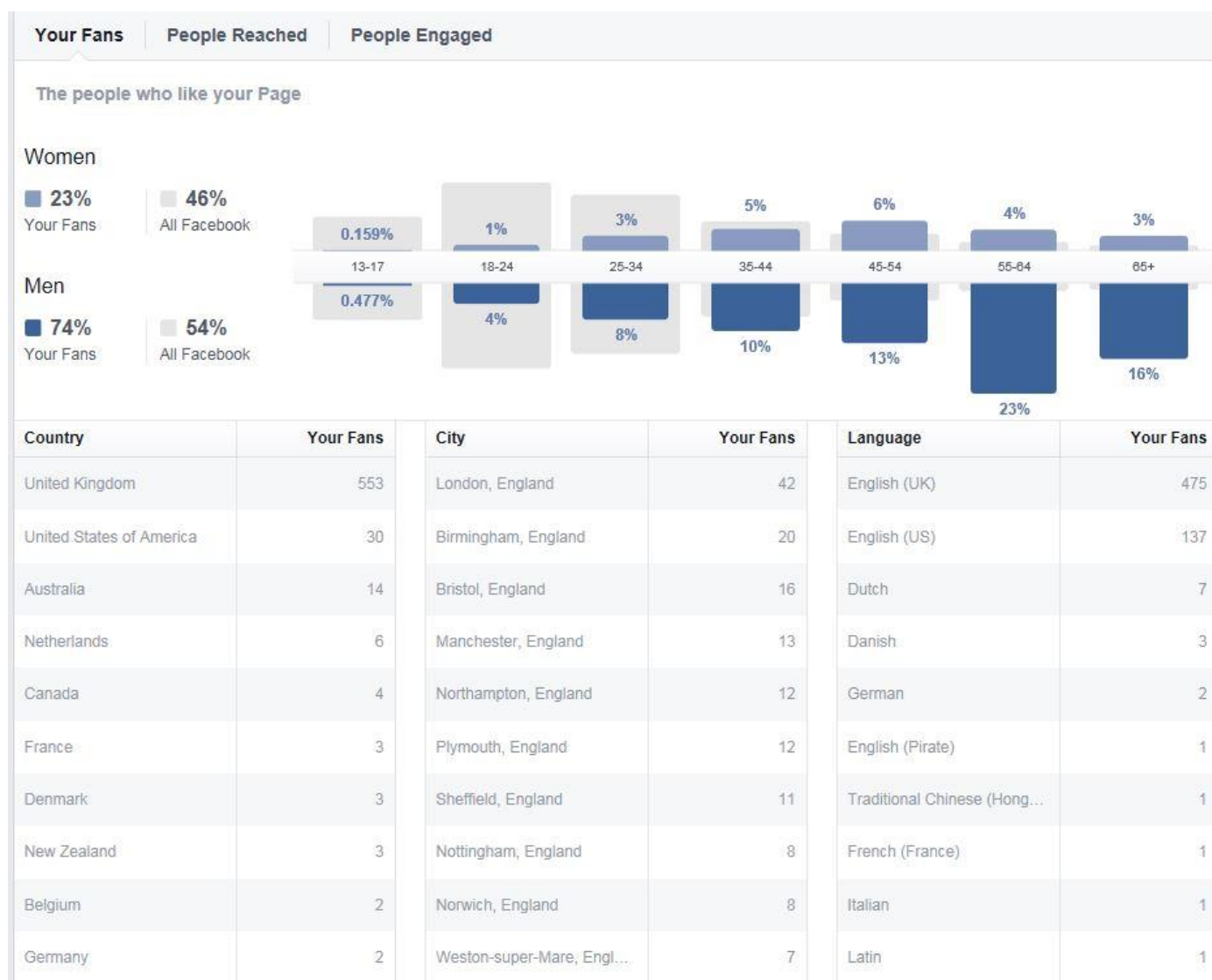
(Bounce rate is a measure of the effectiveness of a website in encouraging visitors to continue with their visit. It is expressed as a percentage and represents the proportion of visits that end on the first page of the website that the visitor sees, so roughly half of our visitors went on to explore further.)

As I wrote last year (and the year before), we're keen to have a lively, fresh and informative site that is a first port of call for anyone with an interest in Morris - but news, in our opinion, must be newsworthy and not just for the sake of it. So if your side has items or photos you believe are of national (or even international) interest, or a traditional annual event worthy of inclusion in our seasonal calendar, please, please let me know at [webeditor@themorrisring.org](mailto:webeditor@themorrisring.org).

I have again taken responsibility for the content of our Facebook page as Olly King has had to focus on more pressing things. Using Facebook and Google searches I am able to make or share many relevant posts but I would really like to see more people posting their side's stuff directly. We have a pretty good audience for you with over 600 people liking and regularly following our page (I suppose we shouldn't be surprised that 74% of them are male) - and we're reaching many more than that when you add shares and likes. One of our Saddleworth posts reached 1782 people!

I have removed the "no discussions here" plea as the Google group does seem moribund and I am more than happy to act as moderator, with my e-bladder at hand. The page description now reads: "A place for members or fans of The Morris Ring to keep up to date with the latest goings on and to share our love of traditional morris dancing." See you there ...

These are the 2014 "Your Fans" metrics.



(I too am worried about our missing 3% with no gender – perhaps Beasts?)

## 11. Elections

a. Bagman of Morris Ring.

b. **Jon Melville: Bagman Elect.** Subject to ratification at the ARM Jon Melville of Anker Morris Men will take over from me in the Spring. Following a 'handover' period I will 'dance out' and he will 'dance in' at the Thaxted meeting. I hope that you will be as supportive of him as you have of me over the past ten years.



Jon was nominated by Harthill Morris (whose Statement of Support was included in Newsletter No 92).

His vocation as college lecturer underlines his communication and presentation skills. As department head he is well-used to managing time, people and resources. In this age when much of a Bagman's function is conducted from a computer keyboard, Jon has all necessary experience as the PC is the everyday tool of his trade.

Harthill has always found Jon to be pleasant, intelligent, dedicated and approachable. These inherent attributes will serve him well in the position.

Filling the boots of the retiring Bagman will be a daunting task. A hard act to follow but we are confident that Jon will bring strength in depth to the role and we urge clubs to support his candidature.

c. Ratification of Area Representatives following decisions reached at Area Meetings (no nominations so far received)

- |                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| • North Midlands | Ben Robinson (2018) |
| • South Midlands | Roger Comley (2018) |
| • Northern       | Paul Cross (2018)   |



## 12. Area Representatives Reports.

### a. North West

David Loughlin (2014)

My thanks must go to Steve Archer with the surprise news that Horwich Prize Medal Morris Men have not renewed their membership with the Morris Ring and joined the Morris Federation. This was one side I really supported when we had the issue of Women Musicians I am deeply surprised as I'm led to believe they are still to remain an all-male dancing side. May they carry on their great traditional dancing for years to come!

It cannot be denied that sides in my area are all desperately requiring more new members to join their respective morris sides and from those Bagmen who kindly took some time out of their very busy lives to fill in the forms that I sent out, I thank you that has helped me to make this report.

Adlington Morris Men, have only 11 full time members, but 2015 has seen a retirement with knee problems and unfortunately one has passed away. So struggling with numbers has made it difficult to be frequently seen out, but they are still keen and have been to JMO, Saddleworth Rushcart and Folk Festivals in the past year.

Manchester Morris Men, are doing a lot better with an average 20 members of which a regular 11, their only problem having is only one regular musician. Sometimes I think it might be a problem when they dance North West just with their unique North West Dances. They are always welcome all over the North of England and are making sure they attend most of the invitations sent to them. They are pushing recruiting to all using their own mobile display boards taking them around local libraries, also running morris tasters sessions with other local teams (must be the Fed again). Most of you who have danced out with Manchester will have met Keith Ashman who has passed the work of Bagman of the side (after 15 years) to John Alexander, I'm sure Keith will still be energetic as ever with support the Morris and Manchester Morris.

Thelwell Morris Men are determined successfully to dance out and to enjoying themselves, but trying to get a musician and 7 dances has its problems. Never the less they have made appearances at one Ring Meeting

last year and do regular Village Fetes and having their Day of Dance is supported by other teams in the North West.

Chester Morris Men, although a membership now of 22 they have more musicians than dancers and events are decided by "Is there 8 dancers or not?". If you ever go to Chester Folk Festival they are in attendance every year, but you really have to be lucky to see them out dancing as bookings are few and taken as weekends away which are, always preferred. Usually seen at Westminster Day of Dance, but this year it is Thaxted Ring Meeting. Their 2014 North West Day of Dance was a most successful and another is shortly to be organised this year (with a bit of luck). A lot of health and family problems has limited the dancing but not the enthusiasm to continue but new members are needed.

Leyland Morris Men have 10 dancers and 6 musicians and a very busy programme last year. I have never seen so many workshops being delivered to Infants and Primary Schools, they must all be CRB checked now called DBS check (Disclosure and Barring Service) (Education my reports). Then they are at the Day Centres, yes another side of elderly gents, but that does not stop them and their enthusiasm dancing at Hospices and Care homes in their local area.

b. **Northern**

Paul Cross

This report is not taking the usual format of a list of what each club has been up to over the last few months. If you are interested in finding out, go online and look them up. My activities, briefly, have been: Scroggling the Holly in Haworth with Oakworth Village MM; a trip down south for the Mendip Ale; practices with GYM and OVMM; a memorial Pint & Curry for BFB (the new K2 is nothing compared to the old K2 for those who are interested), and spending Boxing Day with my wife for the first time since before we were married!

Little Willy has had an eventful year (more of his adventures to follow) and has made a full recovery since his arm fell off at the Leicester 18-30 weekend.

Now for the bulk of my report.

Since that item about the Youth Fund at the Advisory Council meeting in October 2013 (following the tremendous Morris 18-30 weekend hosted by the inimitable Leicester MM) I've been wondering about the number of young dancers in the North. Due to my own age (29 at last count) I'm counting "young" as below 35 (the maximum age at which one can sign up for a Club 18-30 weekend). To this end, and because I think recruitment might be worth touching on too, I sent out a very brief questionnaire to the clubs in my area. For starters, I am pleased to announce that I am not the youngest member of the Morris Ring in the North! That honour goes to White Rose MM with their youngest dancer clocking in at just 10 years old. However, only a few of the other clubs have anybody between the ages of 16 and 35 with the average age of membership creeping inexorably towards retirement.

I also enquired about recruitment and found that most clubs had tried similar tacks (leaflets, newspaper, beer mats, taster days) with mixed successes. The simple upshot is that teams are struggling to recruit, and nobody really knows why. I know that this certainly isn't limited to the North, but when I get a phone call from father dearest to tell me that a certain side in a moderately rural area of the South-West had 24 *dancers* at practice it tends to grate a little; especially when both teams that I regularly dance with barely scrape half a dozen attendees *in total*!

Most sides now have a decent website and a presence on Social Media. A team on Twitter that I know have 40K followers (compared to our rather paltry 500). Is Social Media the answer? I can speak from experience that Great Yorkshire have had several inquiries about bookings via our Twitter feed, but, alas, no new dancers. We are now in the unfortunate position of not being able to take bookings due to lack of members. No physical presence, no new members. Repeat ad infinitum.

So, before I ramble on too long, what is the answer? I have absolutely no clue, but I'd love to hear from anybody who has any ideas. My aim over the next twelve months is to try and get the Northern clubs together for a massed recruitment drive, to share ideas and point new recruits in the direction of their nearest side. I hope to have good news in 2016. Please stay tuned.

c. **North East**

Brian Pollard (2016)

**Benfieldside Morris and Sword, 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Year.** We have enjoyed another successful year. Shared practices with the Durham Rams have proved to be very productive and enabled both sides to enjoy a full programme throughout including attracting two more new recruits!!

We have had a successful series of pub tours during the summer and into the winter culminating in a very well received Christmas charity tour in support of our local hospital's children's ward.

We also danced for a day of community dance in South Shields, an open day at Segedunum Roman fort, Wallsend and at Sedgefield Fair with the Rams.

In June we held a weekend of dance in Bampton (no, not that one!) in the Eden Valley, Cumbria, co-hosting with Great Yorkshire Morris and with guests Gloucestershire and Chalice.

In January we again danced out on Plough Sunday, dancing and processing along with the plough ending the day with an excellent music session.

**Durham Rams.** Our year began on a sad note with the passing of Ron Straughan marking the end of an era for the Rams. Before he died we were able to celebrate with him the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ram's first practice and it was a fitting tribute that we were able to dance the rapper at his funeral. Our closer ties with Benfieldside have been beneficial to both sides with our repertoire of dances being increased and ensuring that both sides have enough men available to fulfil dance-out commitments. Our dance-outs this year included Plough Sunday in Durham, Black Sheep's day of dance in Barnard Castle, Sedgefield Mediaeval Fayre, Wolsingham Church Fete and events at South Shields and a local primary school. The dancing year concluded with some very enjoyable Wednesday night pub tours with Benfieldside.

**Monkseaton Morris Men.**

We have had a fairly busy year. We attended Moulton Village May Queen festival in May and a week-long international folk festival in Belgium centred round the town of St Niklass near Antwerp. We were extremely well looked after and danced with teams from Sweden, Belgium, South of France and Hungary.

We helped Saddleworth Morris Men celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary by attending the Rush Cart in August and ran a very successful Weekend of Dance

in September with teams from Saddleworth, Moulton, Redcar, Chester, Jockey, Barnsley and White Rose. The sun shone, dances were danced and beer was drunk. What more could you ask for? This year we will be celebrating our 60<sup>th</sup>!!

**Darlington Mummers** are looking forward to a significant year in 2015. The team is 50 years old this summer and they are planning a series of raids on local folk clubs and a grand celebratory ceilidh in September.

d. **West Midlands**

Pete Simpson (2014)

It has been a quiet year in the West Midlands with no big anniversaries to celebrate or national dance events in the area. Having said that it seems most club have been busy enough and we did have our first Regional JMO.

A big thank you to Shakespeare MM and Pat Herlihy for bring it all together. The sun shone and it was a smashing day. To dance in the courtyard of Warwick Castle is one of those special places to perform and, at the end of the day, watching Cotswold sides teaching Border sides how to dance Bromsberrow Heath was a joy ( my apologies to the Border Sides).

Despite the dancing being under new management I believe Bromyard Folk Festival proved the usual showcase for some top notch performances from Morris Ring Clubs. Unfortunately I had to miss Bromyard to make an arduous trip up north to join Monkseaton MM and others in their weekend of dance, and what a cracking weekend it was too.

Recruitment seems to have been stagnant this year and a number of clubs have commented they are having commitment problems, for various reasons.

On the brighter side there were at least 3 under 18s, from the area, at the Jigs workshop and 18-30 is coming to Birmingham this year so something for us to look forward to.

Now time for what some of the clubs want to say:

**Earlsdon MM**

Earlsdon Morris Men danced out on 22 occasions between March and December 2014, including two folk festivals, St George's day, Easter weekend and two beer festivals. The highlight of 2014 was our foreman's stag weekend in Luxembourg where we danced in front of the British Ambassador. We currently have 28 dancers and 20 musicians in the team.

### **Green Man's Morris & Sword Club**

In the last year, we have performed at The Duke of York, Park Gate, the Swan, Stratford (Bancroft Gardens), the White Horse and the Black Eagle. In addition, we have also danced at Shenstone on Boxing Day, the Jockey Plough Tour, Middleton Hall, Anker's Big Bash and led the Bower, for the 59th consecutive year.

The Bower was very successful, and we were joined in the procession by members of other clubs, most notably, for the first time, members of Three Spires Ladies Morris, who were a very welcome addition, and it is hoped that their participation will be repeated in future.

We attended what was for us an eventful, but enjoyable Ring Meeting centred on Ely organised by Devils Dyke. We accepted bookings to dance at both a Wedding in Lichfield the day before the Bower and at a Maypole Day in Hednesford.

For the above events the club managed to achieve a respectable turnout of dancers, but once more no new permanent members were forthcoming despite ongoing attempts to follow the Ring advice for recruitment activities. This alongside the ongoing march of time resulted in the club having to turn down a number of events and opportunities to join with other local sides due to insufficient numbers, a situation that stimulates some internal discussion of the clubs' long-term future. This was further enhanced following a poignant but most enjoyable evening dancing with Tarka Morris men at Fradley Junction on 27<sup>th</sup> September who were there as their final ever dance spot before closing as a club.

The year ended in our usual manner on Boxing Day with our mummers play & dancing in Shenstone, which allowed us to collect over £300 for St Giles Hospice - a worthwhile end to the year.

### **Faithful City Morris Men**

2014 has been another good season with plenty of dancing at a wide variety of events. Our core dancing is still our regular Wednesday evenings at a different pub every week throughout Worcestershire and Herefordshire. We're still finding good new pubs after all these years.



A highlight of this year was sending a side to Le Vesinet, in Paris, with the Worcester Twinning Association. Our side danced at a number of events during a long weekend. We also danced at a couple of Harvest Homes, weddings, fetes, the Beavers and other local events such as the Three Choirs Festival. We enjoyed The Day of Dance in Warwick and being part of the world record attempt.

We danced for Children in Need and raised nearly £400 and we also donated £250 to MacMillan Cancer Relief and £250 to St. Michael's Hospice. The hospice donation was in memory of Ian Currie, a former member and Squire of our side who sadly died this year.

Our Wassail was great fun this year, on John Barker's farm. The largest and oldest perry pear tree on Greenstreet Farm is thoroughly free from evil spirits - the fires, shooting and the rest will have scared most of them away but our singing certainly finished off any survivors! This was followed by an evening of folk music and dance in the granary. All great fun with the added benefit of raising a further £500 for MacMillan Cancer Relief.

Our Rapper team competed at DERT again. We introduced a completely new dance and had a thoroughly enjoyable weekend in Leeds.

We have plenty of active members, hence the range of events we're doing, but, like many sides, we are still wrestling with the problems of finding new members. We get interest shown by people but translating that into actually coming and having a go is the difficult part.

Overall, another good year of enjoyable dancing.

### **Jockey Men's Morris Club**

We've had a good and enjoyable year, a great highlight being a weekend visit to Birmingham from our friends Volkdunstgroep Nele (from Grimbergen).

Jockey travelled to events with Westminster, Saddleworth, Peterborough and Monkseaton, as well as taking part in Bromyard and Cleckheaton Folk Festivals.

Our own Day of Dance and Plough Tour in Birmingham have gone from strength to strength, with more visitors joining us than ever before. We continue to have a great relationship with the city of Birmingham, and also the Cathedral and the Library of Birmingham.

That old favourite, Morris on the radio, also featured twice this year, with visits to Heart FM and BBC Radio WM.

Our Facebook and Twitter presence is continuing to expand, and we get a lot of enquiries by these means. We intend to carry on improving what we do in both of these, and our website, as they are often the first contact with people looking for a side.

Despite all of this, our numbers remain about the same, as it is still proving very difficult to get new members for the side. We intend if possible to get into Birmingham more often, as being seen in our city is the best way to show what we do, and the fact we are having a great time doing it.

### **1ST SEDGLEY MORRIS MEN**

This was our 35th year. We all have anniversary fleeces subsidised by our sponsors the multi award winning Kinver Brewery.

At the AGM Paul Davis was unanimously elected to continue as Squire, Jack Cotterill to continue as Foreman, Dave Jeffery as Bagman and Graham Suffolk as Wardrobe Mistress and keeper of the sticks.

During the year we fulfilled our usual annual commitments - Jockey Plough Tour, Dudley for St George's Day, Dawn on May the 1st on Sedgley Beacon, organised the Maypole Festival for local schools, Kinver & Harborne Carnivals and dancing at Ashwood Nurseries. Additionally we attended Bromyard Folk Festival and we also danced at a number of other Black Country fetes and other events. Finally we performed at a number of local beer festivals - helping to maintain the stereotype!

A high spot of the year was our appearance - with members of Jockey M.M. and other sides - at "Sunday Night at the London Palladium". The host and compere Bradley Walsh had asked the director to provide groups of Morris dancers for the show and we were flattered to be selected. Our slight qualms that we might be there to be the butt of the usual Morris Men jokes were quickly overcome. There was some dancing for the audience in the queue outside the theatre. During the show Dave Monckton was appointed spokesman and presented Bradley Walsh with a straw hat which he wore on stage during the show. Not satisfied with our name he christened us "Sedgley Stoats" and there will be a motion at this year's AGM to formally change the name of the side!! A "dance off" between ourselves

and a Cheerleader Group remains unresolved. The other high spot was a 35th Anniversary tour of the Black Country in a vintage double decker bus- an excellent, warm day out in July revisiting favourite locations and hostelryes.

Since the last report we have recruited 2 new members - Total membership is 25 of whom 22 are active musicians and dancers.

During the year we have supported Cystic Fibrosis charities with both dancing at Birmingham Botanical Gardens and also fundraising. Next year we will support Cancer Charities

### **Shakespeare Morris Men:**

Shakespeare Morris Men have enjoyed a varied year!

We have participated in our usual calendar in and around Stratford, including: St. George's Day at Lower Brailes, Shakespeare's Birthday Celebrations in Stratford upon Avon, May Day Celebrations, Stratford Mop Fair, Stratford, and Bidford Christmas Lights switch-on. We have also danced and performed the Apple Play (Mummers) at Mary Arden's Farm and the Fleece at Bretforton Apple Days.

We have danced with a number of other sides during the Summer in Stratford, Warwick and neighbouring villages. We have spent a number of Monday evenings busking on the Bancroft Gardens in Stratford, raising funds for the side. We have also performed in Warwick for the town's St George's Day Parade and as part of the Evesham Morris weekend, hosting sides visiting Stratford upon Avon.

In May we organised the Midlands Regional Day of Dance in Warwick. 15 sides came to Warwick all danced within Warwick Castle as well as around the town centre.

There was an attempt at the Guinness World Record for the greatest number of dancers performing the same dance.. The number was achieved but the person (from another side) who had responsibility for submitting the claim does not appear to have been successful. A lesson to be learned for others with similar ideas. The event raised over £470 for the JMO's preferred charity - Children in Need.

The idea of a Regional JMO has continued, with one planned this summer in Kent. It would be good to see another one in the West Midlands.

We had dance sides performing at Saddleworth Rushcart RM and at Bromyard Folk Festival, and contributed to the combined side that performed at the church on the Sunday morning of Bromyard

In January we ran an open workshop for anybody interested in trying Morris Dancing. The workshop resulting in three, possibly four new members to the side. Add to this two additional musicians who joined us in the Autumn and the new dancer who joined us in March, we are now looking to secure larger premises for our practice nights.

Looking ahead, we have 10 men due to attend the Morris Ring Meeting in Helmond, Netherlands in May of this year

### **Stafford Morris Men**

An interesting year for Stafford Morris Men in many ways!

Whilst we have had many good dance occasions over the year we have struggled to maintain a constant supply of ready and able dancers at both practice nights and paid dance events. The reasons are understandable.

Some members have reached an age now where dancing has become a struggle (though they have now become valuable collectors!) Other members have had too many commitments outside of the morris, such as work or family commitments. Some members have moved away from Stafford and joined other clubs, some have moved on to other hobbies.

But still, the club soldiers on. We still have 'the old faithful' dancing with us, who have danced with us for many a year and will hopefully continue into the future. We have also gained a couple of new 'keen' members! Which is fantastic. Our AGM was a good moment for me to ask for honest feedback from the men, many expressed negative points of where the club was going wrong but more importantly, they explained how they thought these problems could be fixed. Because of this open discussion, the format for practice evenings was changed and dancing standards have begun to improve.

John Edwards has taken over as Captain of Sword which has given the club a new element when dancing out and breaks up the evening effectively providing explosive entertainment!

We have recently had our annual feast which seemed to be enjoyed by all! We hope that all our guests return next year for more roast beef and (hopefully not burnt) custard.

As we move into our new year of dancing we hope to extend our dancing repertoire, attempting more complex traditions. We are still on the hunt for new members. And we have now started to contact past or out of town members for more support. Whilst finding new members is great, many have to start from scratch so the support of out of town members is crucial for us. To conclude, dips and troughs but Stafford Morris keeps dancing on into 2015!

### Uttoxeter Heart of Oak Morris Men

Uttoxeter had a good year of dancing out with plenty of bookings accepted and many more turned away. In terms of the men, however, it has been a year of heartache due to the sad loss of Ken Smith, one of our musicians and an occasional dancer. Ken was a stalwart of the club and would always turn out and play, but after a short illness, died earlier in the year. A new tune and dance has been composed in his memory, in the style of Fieldtown, called 'Ken Smith's Morris'.



Uttoxeter also seem to have had a number of men fall by the wayside due to the illnesses of advancing years. In addition, we struggle to recruit new members in any sufficient numbers to keep ourselves proofed against 'the effluxion of time', as they say.

During 2014 we danced out at 11 paying venues, mostly fetes and festivals, but including a Prom Night at Westwood College, Leek! We joined forces with 1<sup>st</sup> Sedgeley Morris to perform at the East Park Extravaganza event in Wolverhampton (we still have your £75 performance fee for you if you want it chaps!). We had a brilliant day at the Eccleshall Festival, a biennial event which was well organised and well attended in glorious sunshine (which always helps).

We also gave a couple of talks on the Morris to societies in Eccleshall and Uttoxeter, in addition to our usual fortnightly Thursday dancing out sessions during the summer.

This year saw our 60<sup>th</sup> year of dancing and we celebrated with a dinner for men and wives at the 'Shrew' at Kingstone. Our 60<sup>th</sup> Boxing day noon dance in Uttoxeter market square was also attended by Stafford Morris Men who have joined us for most of those 60 years. A reasonable crowd turned out to watch in, for 26<sup>th</sup> December, decent weather. Some of the Men performed a Mummer's play after the dancing, not too badly considering there had been just one practice which wasn't attended by all the performers!

Despite our setbacks, we are still going and will be performing and looking for recruits during 2015 as usual.

### **White Hart Morris Men.**

White Hart Morris Men are still in existence - just! Last year 2014 we struggled through, often with only 6 dancers, leaving no room for injuries/family crises, etc. We therefore decided not to take bookings if there was any chance of letting people down.

On a more positive note we did hold our usual 1st May Dawn Dance & May Bank Holiday Monday Bredon Hill Tour. We also attended Saddleworth's Rushcart weekend & have been invited back this year for the third time.

Our Ale on the 1st weekend of October was deemed a success with a Black Country Tour of Brew Pubs on the Saturday, followed by a feast in the local pub. Any Morris Men within range of Alcester who would like to, will be very welcome to join us in the Town Hall from 8.00pm on Monday evenings.

Best to ring Bagman Barry on 07800 849393.

e. **North Midlands** Ben Robinson (2015) **No report received.**

### **Musicians' Instructional 2015 Hosted by the Ripley Morris Men**

*St. Wilfred's Church Hall, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, 30<sup>th</sup> Jan - 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2015.*

The Instructional was attended by 28 musicians drawn mostly from Morris Ring and Federation sides but also including some with no specific affiliation.

Leaders were Malcolm Frier (Ripley MM), Clive DuMont (Mendip), Tim Barber (Great Yorkshire Morris), and Eric Foxley (Foresters). This was Eric's first



attendance and proved to be a literal baptism of fire as his OHP began to emit large quantities of smoke during his presentation!

The instructional ran mostly along tried and tested lines, with recording and playback sessions, a study of the limitations of written musical notation in representing music of a danceable nature, and an exploration of the influence on the music of a musician's chosen instrument. On Saturday evening, attendees were invited to the Ripley Morris Annual Ale Feast, at which they were able to perform as musicians. The Group also performed two Morris tunes played separately and together.

Sunday morning sessions started with individual delegates playing while the men of Ripley Morris danced and gave feedback to the musicians from a dancer's perspective. There were also sessions on playing as a massed band, and on playing as organised groups, making better use of multiple musicians in playing for clubs' own performances.

I would like to record my sincere thanks to Leaders Clive, Tim and Eric for their input throughout the Instructional. I also owe a sincere debt of gratitude to Gilbert and David Butler and to Sally-Anne Booth for splendid catering and other support over the weekend, and finally, but by no means least, to the Ripley Morris Men for hospitality and dancing for the musicians on Sunday morning.

Feedback from the attendees has been both positive and constructively critical and encouraging of running future Instructionals. The weekend as it stands is not financially viable as a stand-alone event, and benefits greatly from being associated with an occasion such as an ale feast. This confers two main benefits. Bookings on venues can be held open up until the date of the event itself without incurring potential financial penalties, and a dancing side is available to allow musicians to perform and receive constructive comment. Ripley would most certainly be happy to host this event again, but the event might benefit from a change of venue. If other sides expressed themselves interested in hosting the event, the existing teaching "faculty" would be happy to present the Instructional.

Malcolm Frier Ripley Morris Men

f. **Eastern** Mike Stevens (2016)

This has been a good year for Morris events in the east with two (what we used to call) Ring meetings, hosted by Devil's Dyke MM and Thaxted MM, and a Joint Morris Organisations day in Cambridge.

Devil's Dyke hosted a very professional meeting in Ely with accommodation in the boarding school. Tours in the surrounding fenland area introduced participants (all of whom boarded for the weekend) to this unique landscape. The Thaxted meeting took its familiar form, accommodating weekend visitors and also attracting local sides up for a day out. A sunny weekend always helps and both days benefitted.

Cambridge Morris Men hosted the JMO day of dance in May, again organised very professionally. Many sides took part, representing all three national organisations. Complements all round - and I would particularly mention Cambridge Bagman, Graham Cox and Squire, John Jenner, both of whom have been East Area representative in the past.

Other sides in the area have hosted their own days of dance, weekend camps and foreign tours. And most sides report having attended events organised by others, such as the Straw Bear festival, Saddleworth's meeting of the Ring and several Ales.

Since September 2013 the Morris Ring Youth Fund has supported four workshops for young dancers, the first in Cambridge and subsequently three in Thaxted. Over the four meetings, young dancers representing six sides in the area were introduced to a variety of traditions and dances and were given the opportunity to work up several to performance standard. Appropriately, Thaxted meeting in May saw their first opportunity to perform as a team, which they did in the Town Street show, having toured separately with their own sides during the day. If you want to see this dance it is on YouTube under "MorrisRingEast". Other events attended by their home sides allowed them to get together to dance - notably at the Cambridge JMO, Peterborough day of dance, Rutland and Kemp's Norfolk tour, Saddleworth and King's tour of Thornham. I'm very pleased to note that the Thaxted workshop in December was also attended by Tom and Cory from Leicester MM and I hope this will be the start of a workshop group in the North Midlands. Participants range in age

from 10 to 18 years and interest would be welcome from other sides with dancers in that age-range wherever they are. With youngsters moving through this age-range in just a few years there is a constant need for new entrants at the younger end if the group is to continue to flourish.

I asked bagmen if their side had any members who are teachers, if they have any connection with a school or youth group and if they have anyone who would like to support the teaching of Morris in such a group. There was some positive response to this, but with only a few sides feeling capable. I hope the new "Morris! Hey!" package might allow some sides to promote and support the teaching of Morris dance in schools.

Most bagmen report a better year in 2014. Numbers continue to be a concern for most sides but a few have gained new dancers. Those with younger dancers in the team seem the most satisfied with their situation. Sadly, new men have not arrived in time for all sides. Last year saw Stevenage Sword go "mixed" in order to survive, so they are no longer members of the Morris Ring. They have always appeared at Straw Bear each January and this year was no exception so I wish them well.

g. **South West and Wales** Tim Sercombe (2014)

"I was not so much elected in to the post of South West Area Rep., at last year's ARM, as pushed in to the job, (somewhat reluctantly by the then incumbent Squire of the Ring Robin Springett) the elected Rep., Jed....., (can't remember his last name) from Wyvern Jubilee, had failed to make an appearance, not just at this particular ARM, but also previous advisory council meetings, and so as the squire (who was a little exasperated by this time, with his lack of commitment) said and I quote "we will have to have bloody Sercombe, as the rep. after all."

It has been a quiet year in post, apart from the Ring Meeting hosted by my own side Dartington, in the picturesque town of Dartmouth, I was, along with most of the team involved with the planning committee for the event, and I, along with two other men organised and hosted a tour on the day. For those that attended the meeting we as a side did our utmost to make our guests stay in Devon, an enjoyable one, culminating in a massed display in the town of Dartmouth on the Sunday, in glorious sunshine (which we had been blessed throughout the weekend with) and witnessing the incumbent Squire Robin

Springett, dance out, and the elected Squire Adam Garland, dance in. A lot of hard work had gone into the organisation of the weekend, (as many of you will know that have been involved in running a Ring Meeting) by the whole team, and many fretful hours spent worrying about if we would have a venue at a very later stage in the planning, but all came right on the night, as they say.

In October, on the Saturday before the Advisory Council Meeting to be held in Leicester, I was called up by the host of a BBC Gloucestershire radio programme, in my capacity as Area Rep. for the south west, to give a comment on air the following day, Sunday, on the controversy surrounding the picture of our glorious leader, PM, call me Dave Cameron, being pictured on the front of one of the Red Topped tabloid's posing for a picture with a blacked up Boarder Morris side, asking if this was an appropriate thing a Prime Minister should be doing in these days of political correctness, they were seeking for a controversial comment from the Ring. They wanted me to go on the show live, the following day, I explained that I would be travelling to Leicester in the morning, but he could contact me on my cell phone, he was not keen as is often there is a loss of signal, so we compromised and we pre-recorded the piece to be broadcast on his show.

Though I say it myself, I was a modicum of restraint (those that know me will be surprised at this, an opportunity to have a rant at the government of the day on live radio, a heaven sent opportunity, but I was representing the Morris Ring so restraint was called for) and I quashed all aspects of controversy (racial or otherwise) surrounding this thorny issue, explaining that the teams on the Border regions of England and Wales, for centuries or more, have been blacking up to conceal their identity, when out dancing, who have ostensibly been begging for money, and somewhat looked down upon by landlords, landowners, and employers alike, as a disgraceful way to carry on. There have never been any racial connotations with Morris sides blacking up, and never would be. I went on to explain that it was a time honoured folk tradition, and always would be in parts of the country.

I caught the broadcast on the BBC iPlayer the following day, and though it had been edited, and not broadcast in the correct sequence that we held the conversation in, I must say that it was a balanced and fair piece of broadcasting, and the Ring would have been proud of their Area Rep., for once.

In my other duties I have been asked for the Display Boards, (that reside with Past Squire of the Ring Robin Springett) by the Chalice Morris Men and as I go to press they have not been collected or asked to be forwarded on to them, I am still waiting Bob.

h. **South Midlands**

Roger Comley (2015)

Thanks are due to all the sides who have celebrated their local customs and traditional events by inviting others to celebrate with them as participants, guests or audience. The events are sometimes not easy to understand until explained and by using the media and hand-outs available before and on the day we can recall the event and hopefully give encouragement to others to seek out their own local 'lost' custom to celebrate. Who knows how many old Plough Monday or other events are just waiting to be researched and resurrected? Keep looking and when you find one, be prepared for the "doubters and scoffers" who can be educated by giving them something happy to think about. P.S. The Squire of the MR has been seen performing the *Manx Scallop Dance* and three sides have told me what to do with my euphonium!

i. **South East**

Cliff Marchant (2016)

I have tried to contact all sides in my area by email asking how they are doing etc. and received 11 out of 26 replies.

Age is the most worrying factor for most sides, although Longman have a 'strong' side of all ages. A couple of sides are sharing practise facilities with Morris Federation sides to reduce costs and there are sides, for example Waddard, who are really struggling to keep going and not always able to get 6 men dancing out.

Chanctonbury Ring, who are celebrating 40 years of dancing the North West tradition this year, have a core of 12 dancers and 4 musicians (Cotswold and NW). Chanctonbury Ring joined with King John MM to form a combined side to attend the 40th Rushcart last year, thankfully we share the same dances.

We (Chanctonbury Ring) have a joint stand each year with Brighton Morris who are an all-male Morris Federation side, who always have at least two sets up and sometimes three. They manage to get men to join from the universities in the town, (Sussex, Brighton) something for the Ring to think about?

I have yet to have a side contact me as their Rep and at the very enjoyable Winchester feast some men did not even know there was an Area Rep. One wonders if we are really needed.

**13.** Ratification of Perth Morris as members of the Morris Ring.

**14. Discussion item 1:** The organisation of future Morris Ring ARMs

John Whelan has proposed that due to the problems encountered in getting a side to volunteer to host the ARM that a group of 'retirees' form an ad hoc group to take on the organisation of future ARMs in an appropriate central location. Costs could be held down doing our own catering - following the example set by the annual Jigs Weekend.

**Discussion item 2:** The Committee of the Joint Morris Organisations:  
proposed Statement of Purpose

**15.** Future Programme.

- a. Morris Ring Meetings 2014 and beyond. (Bagman)
- b. Instructionals

**16.** Date and Venue of next ARM.

**17.** A.O.B (Notified to the Squire in advance please.

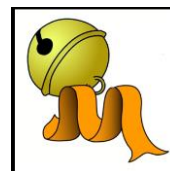




## Appendix 2:

# The Committee of the Joint Morris Organisations

**The Morris Ring – The Morris Federation – The Open Morris**



## Statement of Purpose

The Committee exists to help in the promotion and development of Morris Dancing, and to address issues of common interest.

## Terms of Reference and Definitions

### 1 – Morris Dancing

Shall mean all styles of dance and allied traditions commonly included under the umbrella term of Morris Dancing; this shall include, but not be limited to; Cotswold, Border, North West, Molly, Long Sword, Rapper Sword, Fools, and Beasts.

### 2 – Membership

JMO membership currently means the three national organisations; The Morris Ring, The Morris Federation, and The Open Morris. Other organisations may be admitted subject to a vote in favour by the existing committee members.

### 3 – The Committee

Shall be made up of no more than three members of each of The Morris Ring, The Morris Federation, and The Open Morris.

### 4 – JMO Objectives

- a – To co-operate when addressing issues of common interest
- b – To promote Morris and allied traditions generally
- c – To encourage high standards of performance
- d – To maintain and promote communication between the member organisations
- e – To negotiate and arrange insurance for the member Sides
- f – To arrange joint events between the members
- g – To encourage cross-membership working on projects relating to Morris Dance

NB. This list is not considered to be exhaustive

### 5 – Committee Meetings

- a - The Committee shall meet annually to discuss current matters of interest and future proposals which affect the membership. Additional meetings can be arranged by agreement if urgent or important issues arise.

b – The Committee meeting shall be held and run by each member organisation in turn. Such members shall host the meeting, and produce the agenda and minutes. The Chair for the meeting shall be drawn from the hosting organisation.

c – When matters arise for which a vote is required each member of the Committee shall have one vote.

d – Members of the committee can invite any party to attend who, in the opinion of the committee members, has an interest in the matters to be discussed. Any such attendees shall not, however, have a vote.

e – The date of the meeting shall be set so as to be mutually convenient.

f – Where appropriate the Committee can agree to ask anyone from the full membership to undertake specific tasks which contribute to the stated purpose of the JMO

## 6 – National Dancing Events

a – Each year one national day of dance shall be held as a JMO event.

b - All financial aspects will be considered and agreed by the appointed or elected treasurers for the three member organisation prior to any arrangements being finalised.

c – The organisation responsible for hosting the Committee Meeting shall also be responsible for arranging and hosting the national day of dance. These arrangements can be delegated to any of that organisation's total membership

d –The liability for any loss incurred shall be on a pro-rata basis by the three membership organisations

## 7 – Regional Dancing Events

a – Any Side or Group from any of the total JMO membership can host a dancing event under the name of the JMO at any time. These can be but are not limited to invited guests only, regional events, days of dance, weekend events, instructionals, and workshops.

b – The host Side or group shall be liable for any loss incurred

## 8 – Charitable Donations

a –The Side or group which hosts any JMO event can choose a charity to which any monies collected shall be donated.

b – If a charity is nominated, any monies raised as a profit during the event shall be donated to this charity by the host

## 9 – Dissolution

At any time the Committee can be dissolved at the request of any one member subject to giving reasonable notice to all concerned parties. Dissolution of the committee does not preclude cross-organisational working by any of the Morris Ring, Morris Federation, and Open Morris thereafter.

the MORRIS RING  
founded 1934