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## Newsletter No. 125

February 2022

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## **Future Events (DEPENDING ON RESTRICTIONS)**

### **2022**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 5 <sup>th</sup> March                     | <b>Annual Representatives' Meeting, Oak Farm, Cannock</b><br><br><i>Thanks to Peter Copley (Stafford) for organising. They may be able to support online streaming for those unable to attend as well.</i> |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> April                     | <b>Joint Morris Organisation National Day of Dance - Liverpool 2022</b><br><br><i>They say 3<sup>rd</sup> time's a charm! More details to follow</i>   |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> June   | <b>Thaxted Morris Weekend</b><br><br><i>Later than usual due to extra bank holiday. All teams within the Morris Ring welcome regardless of gender profile.</i>   |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> July                     | <b>Letchworth Centenary Ring Meeting - FULLY BOOKED</b>  |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup> August | <b>Saddleworth Rushcart</b>  |

## **ARM Notices**

### **Morris Ring ARM, Oak Farm Hotel, Hatherton, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

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

### **Elections**

At the 2022 ARM we shall be electing a new Squire of the Morris Ring; the Treasurer of the Ring has agreed to continue in position. Area reps will be elected/re-elected as required.

### **Voting in Elections**

1. Squire – for full Member sides not attending the ARM, postal votes (including email) stating clearly the preferred candidate for the position, should be sent by the Bagman of the side to the Ring Bagman to arrive not later than midnight on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022. Note that any side attending the ARM will have their postal vote removed from the ballot.
2. Area Representatives – by show of hands among the attending Member clubs in the Area Meetings, if required.

### **Voting on the proposed changes to the Constitution and Policy documents**

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

### **Candlesticks**

There will be formal acceptance of the new candle sticks, kindly donated by Joe Oldaker of Anker Morris, at the feast on Saturday night. The Sephton Candlesticks will be formally retired after this event and presented to the care of Hartley Morris Men.

## **Agenda for the 2022 Morris Ring Annual Representatives' Meeting**

1. Attendees and apologies
2. Minutes of the 2021 meeting  
(<https://themorrisring.org/sites/default/files/docs/bagnews/minutes-morris-ring-arm-6th-march-2021.pdf>)
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Officers' reports:
  - a. Squire of the Morris Ring
  - b. Bagman of the Morris Ring
  - c. Treasurer of the Morris Ring
  - d. Chairman of the Advisory Council
  - e. Morris Ring Archive Group
  - f. Webmaster and publications
  - g. Overseas Bagman
5. Vote to approve/reject adoption of new constitution and supporting documents  
For proposed documents, see Bagman's Newsletter 124  
<https://themorrisring.org/sites/default/files/docs/bagnews/newsletter-no-124-december-2021.pdf>
6. Motion from Saddleworth Morris Men
7. Election of Squire
8. Vote on Big Jigs application for full membership
9. Area Representatives' Reports
10. Future events
11. Date of next meeting
12. Any other business

*It would be helpful if any AOB items beyond the usual event notices are submitted to the Bagman in advance of the meeting, if only so that responses can be prepared where appropriate.*

## **Supporting Documents for Agenda**

### **Officers' Reports**

#### **Squire's Report**

In the past year I have undertaken several activities in collaboration with the Bagman and the Treasurer to further the aims of the Ring and its member clubs. These include;

1. The Squire's commission; as promised, a number of discussions were held throughout the year. This has primarily resulted in the new constitution and supporting documents, which I hope the membership will accept at the ARM. I would like to thank all the individuals who supported this process and hope the process helps the Morris Ring to face new challenges in the years to come.
2. JMO; building on the Ring's relationships with the Morris Federation and the Morris Open, we have collectively strived to promote morris to a wider audience where appropriate. Examples of this include a joint letter to the organisers of both the Platinum Jubilee and Commonwealth Games, asking them to be mindful of morris and its unique position in UK history. Hopefully this will bear fruit and morris will be given a role within these events which will be seen around the world. We are also looking forward to the JMO Day of Dance in Liverpool on April 9th, organised on behalf of the Ring by local sides, led by North-West area rep Dave Loughlin and Tony Foard. Thanks to both of them, and fingers crossed we'll actually make it to Liverpool this time!
3. Attending events; like everyone else, I was finally able to get out dancing and playing again and have enjoyed the hospitality of several sides in the latter half of the year. After a particularly wet weekend in Saddleworth, the Plymouth Ring Meeting followed in September and was a great weekend all round. My thanks to Plymouth Morris for putting together such an enjoyable event despite 18 months of interruptions thanks to the pandemic. I also wish to thank Peterborough Morris and the Morris 18-30 for hosting me at their respective days of dance. Overall, I feel positive that these events show we have the capacity to bounce back and hopefully we will have more brilliant events in the next year!

Hopefully the year ahead will hold much more dancing for everyone, and I hope to be able to see more of you before my term as squire ends. In the meantime, morris on!

Thank You,

Simon Newman

Squire

## **Bagman's Report**

Well, here we are again! My first full year as bagman has certainly been interesting to say the least and has highlighted to me how much reliance is placed on an often-unsung group of individuals within the Ring who tirelessly strive to make sure everything works. Thanks as ever to the Squire, Treasurer, Advisory Council Chair and Web Editor, amongst others, for all their unseen work.

I would like to issue the annual reminder to all sides that we need hosts for Ring meetings to make themselves known at the earliest opportunity. Letchworth and Saddleworth are kindly hosting for 2022, but we need to always be looking ahead to keep a list of potential locations available. 2024 will be the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Morris Ring's formation so we will be looking to hold celebratory events in that year, so any suggestions as to what we can do would be very welcome. It is recognised that Covid has made the prospect of hosting such events a more daunting task, but the Ring has a wide range of experience to call upon when needed so please do not be afraid to ask for it.

With regard to communications, I would like to remind all sides that it is crucial to keep side contact details on the website up to date, as this is our primary means of passing information on. I appreciate for newly elected officers of sides that this can be a perplexing task, but we do have handy guides on the website that can talk you through the process step by step, and in the event that these do not help either the Web Editor or I are easily contactable for additional assistance.

In the meantime, we have an exciting year as an organisation ahead of us with the JMO in Liverpool in April, Letchworth's Centenary Ring Meeting in July and (all being well) a variety of events throughout the year to bring dancing in public back after 2 years of erratic events. On top of this, we have an exciting opportunity to promote morris with the extended Bank Holiday in early June, which I know many teams are capitalising upon, so if you haven't already considered dancing out that weekend now may be an opportunity to see what local events are out there to engage with local communities and promote our traditions.

Here's to another's years dancing.

Peter Austin

Bagman

## **Treasurer's Report**

*To be submitted*

## **Chair of the Advisory Council's Report**

The Advisory Council, as normal, met twice during the year, both times on Zoom.

The first meeting took place the Saturday following the ARM, for convenience. The second in October, as usual.

The agenda on both occasions was much the same centring on Covid, the Blackface issue, the Morris shop and at the second meeting an update on the proposed constitution.

Hopefully all these issues are all coming to successful conclusions, in some cases after several years work and a new Squire will have the opportunity to ask us for advice on some new topics.

Pete Simpson

Chair of the Advisory Council

## **Morris Ring Archive Group**

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

## **Introduction**

This report covers the activities of the Group for the period from the ARM 2021.

## **MRAG Meetings**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Group did not meet in 2021. As Chair I sought MRAG members' views on using Zoom for a meeting. The majority of members were not in favour.

## **Handbook of Morris Dances – Chairman's report**

In 2020 I was approached by Harry Stevenson of the Winchester Morris Men with the offer of Lionel Bacon's personal, and heavily annotated, copy of the edition of the Handbook published by

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subscription in 1957. I eventually collected the book in person. The Group agreed that the item should be digitised and I advised the staff of the ERO of our wishes.

I transcribed the annotations in the Handbook to ensure that once digitised, the notes, in faint pencil and difficult to interpret in some cases, would be available along with the digitised images. The task took nearly 200 hours. The wisdom of that intervention was confirmed by our assigned archivist when he examined the Handbook. The item was deposited in September 2020.

Following on that work lead to an approach to the family of the late David Eales, my predecessor as Foreman of Bathampton Morris Men, 19967 – 1994, and a personal friend of Lionel Bacon from their time with Whitchurch Morris Men. His copy of a very early edition of the Handbook has also been donated to the Morris Ring Archive.

The differences between these two early editions of the Handbook compared to the edition currently on sale is significant and are being investigated.

### **Morris Ring Photographic Archive Report 2021 – Duncan Broomhead**

It has been another busy year for the Photographic Archive, with a good flow of material and information into, and out of the Archive. I have dealt with enquiries from morris sides, Morris Ring Archive Group members, three authors, a film maker, researchers & collectors, local history groups and other archives.

I have received a regular stream of photographs from Morris sides and ex dancers, which included some real gems. The most notable single deposit was from Pruw Boswell. Her papers include the preparatory notes and photographs for her two books, 'Morris Dancing on the Lancashire Plain, The Preston Tradition' and 'Morris Dancing on the Lancashire Plain, The Horwich Inquiry,' plus her notes and photographs, for an unpublished volume about Morris Dancing in the Fleetwood area.

The biggest enquiry from an individual, was to identify over 140 Morris sides in a collection of post cards, scans of these cards and their ID, are now in the Photographic Archive. The longest enquiry spanned five months, and was for Conkertreee Films, a German film company who are making a film about Morris Dancing, but this enquiry progressed beyond just photographs.

### **Morris Ring Logbooks – Charlie Corcoran**

Apart from answering half a dozen or so enquiries seeking information from the Logbooks I admit to having done nothing for the past year or so. Even when meetings were happening even though asked so to do the host sides have not provided me with any information or details about their meeting that might allow me to write an entry. This is rather sad really. As a minimum the Keeper of the Logbook needs to be informed who attended, details of tours, display dances, feast information, any presentations etc. Copies of all the printed materials would go a long way to provide this information as would emails concerning joining information, accommodation, etc. *In the run-up to a meeting please simply add the Keeper of the Logbook your email list and after the event please arrange for me to receive copies of programmes and handouts.*

I reported last time that Logbook volume 8 is partially transcribed (this covers up to 1990) but I have made no further progress with this, partly because the handwriting is even worse than mine,



but also following the death of my PC, the software I was using to transcribe speech to text was not compatible with its replacement. I accept that this is a poor excuse but nevertheless true.

Volumes 9 to 11 are also handwritten but the later logbooks are a mass of loose leaf typed sheets, so sorting will be a different challenge.

Volumes 1 – 7 of the Logbooks are transcribed (and available as word & PDF files) but there are some attachments (letters, menus, Funeral Orders of Service and the like) pasted into the Logs that have not been copied.

The book / paper volumes are currently lodged with me and while they will eventually need to be housed with the rest of the MR paper archive this will make it more difficult for individuals to request a copy (of whatever) and rather like to recently published 1921 Census there are bound to be transcription errors.

### **Keeper of the Paper Archive – Geoff Douglas**

I have received a copy of the Men of Wight companion volume for deposit.

### **Sword Dance Archive Report 2021 - Phil Heaton**

Over the last few years, the Archive of mostly Longsword material (Descriptions, Notations and ephemera) bequeathed to me by Ivor Allsop has been digitised mainly by Ron Shuttleworth in Coventry. It will be available online later in the year.

Copies of the digitisation which will be available eventually to consult, will be lodged with Goathland Plough Stots at their excellent new venue at the Community Hub in the North York Moors, The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library and hopefully at the Lit and Phil Library in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Ivor's collection of Audio tapes has been digitised at Leicester University by the British Library, Sound Archive - The National Archives and copies of the of the tape's descriptions will also be available online. Audible files will be available from me later.

I continue to receive current and defunct teams' videos and the Sword Dancing Archive on YouTube has about 500 videos available to view.

My collection of Rapper information, history and notations continues to expand. The developing and very active Rapper dance teams both in modern and Traditional style ensures that there will be a growing Archive.

Film and television companies are often in contact, and I endeavour to match production expectations with those teams worthy of showing excellent performance.

## **John Frearson**

I still have David Welti's papers which are almost catalogued - should they be sent to Essex? I also have some seven volumes of the Bagman's scrapbooks, with miscellanea from my years as Bagman [posters, reports, photos etc. etc.]. Also, my volume of kit photos for the sides I came across at Ring Meetings, Ales and visits etc.

The Bedford Morris Albums, some nine boxes of albums are packed ready to go to the Bedford Record Office, when I am mobile again, and the plague has abated. The Rugby Morris albums, accounts and logs are nearly ready to go to the Warwick Record Office - the booklet was published back in 2011

[Details at <https://www.johnphfrearson.co.uk/publications/>]

The Emberton Morris material is now back with the owners, and they intend to deposit it with the Vaughn William's Library. The booklet was published in 2021.

[Details at <https://www.johnphfrearson.co.uk/publications/> ]

The Luton Longstraw Archive is still in my care until I have written up the booklet [hopefully soon!] and will be deposited with the Bedfordshire Record Office.

The backup photocopies of Morris dance info which Chris Metherell made when he was Archivist and had access to a copier [2No. 5 ream paper boxes full - say c.5000 pages] are still with me - do we keep or recycle? Someone might like them and find these copies useful.

I still have material to get to Duncan [photos etc] and to Matt [info on Sutherland etc].

I hold a lot of old Music books etc - some Morris, much folk dance and song which will need a home sometime. And quite possibly an old edition Black Book – although not sure how to identify!!

Probably a lot more when I dig down in the cupboard - but this will do for the present.

## **Web Editor's Report**

*To be Submitted*

## **Overseas Bagman Report**

See East of England Area Rep's report

## **Motion from Saddleworth Morris Men**

As a result of the unprecedented global pandemic of COVID-19 the Morris world, like many others, ground to a halt. Many teams have struggled and unfortunately some have not survived some may still succumb yet.

Another consequence of this curtailment was that the executive officers of the Morris Ring (Squire, Bagman and Treasurer) have not been able to get out into the wider Morris community and represent the Ring at events large and small.

Saddleworth Morris Men believe that the Squire of The Ring should see and be seen, and in doing so have the opportunity to progress in person the mandate for which he was originally voted in by members. We also believe that, whilst working very hard behind the scenes, the Squire and his fellow officers deserve some of the pomp that usually goes with the role - something that can't quite be achieved via Zoom.

To that end and in the hope of a more normal Morris calendar in 2022 Saddleworth Morris Men would like to propose that the current incumbents:

Simon Newman - Squire of The Morris Ring  
Peter Austin - Bagman of The Morris Ring  
Clayton Francis - Treasurer of The Morris Ring

Are given an extension of twelve months to their current terms in office in order to provide that representation.

Dave Biggs, Squire, Saddleworth Morris Men

## Candidates for Squire of the Morris Ring

### 1. Emma Melville



I am Emma Melville, a member of Anker, First Class Stamp Appalachian, Dolphin, Knightlow and Hinckley Bullockers. I have been involved with morris and The Ring for nearly fifty years – as a spectator until I went to university and then I got involved. I joined Portland Poklers North West team – first to play, then as dancer and eventually foreman. I also learnt step clog, joined Touchwood Appalachian and became a musician for Dolphin Morris Men.

Moving to Nuneaton, I joined Anker Morris and Hinckley Bullockers as musician and First Class Stamp as a dancer. I organised Anker's Ring meeting in 2015 and, for the last four years, have been Anker's squire. I teach the dance at First Class Stamp and run Appalachian workshops at the festivals they attend. I was instrumental in the team moving to the Ring. They danced in in 2019 – the first mixed side to become full members. I also play for Knightlow and have recently taken over running Hinckley Bullockers.

I am part of the Squire's commission looking into constitutional change and relevance. I believe the Ring should maintain traditions and standards while evolving to survive in the modern world and engaging the next generation. Co-operation and positive relationships with the JMO are important and something I can maintain.

Morris, to me, is entertainment, joy and fellowship – a community and family which is a major part of my life. I feel this immersion and enjoyment makes me ideal to lead the Ring into the future.

# Leicester

*Squire: Joe Krych*



# Morrismen

*Bagman: Charlie Corcoran*

Personal details redacted for GDPR

23 November 2021

## **Emma Melville: Candidate for Squire of the Morris Ring**

We have known Emma for many years both as an accomplished musician for 1<sup>st</sup> Class Stamp and Anker Morris and now as Squire of Anker Morris. She has been a stalwart supporter of Man Friday's Midsummer Evening in Thrussington and a regular attendee at feasts hosted by Leicester, Kennet, Ripley, Jockey and Devil's Dyke, as well as many Morris Ring meetings, where she always proves approachable and willing to offer help, support and encouragement to others.

Emma has been immersed in the Morris community all her life, and her knowledge of the traditions and politics of the wider Morris world, along with her professional expertise, proved invaluable as a member of the Squire's Commission to review the Morris Ring constitution.

Emma's positive, friendly personality and immense people skills make her an ideal candidate to help lead the Morris Ring forward in these changing and challenging times. Leicester Morrismen are proud to propose and strongly recommend that Emma Melville should be the next Squire of the Morris Ring.

Yours sincerely

Bagman Leicester Morrismen

## 2. Nigel Strudwick



The Morris has been a major part of my life since I took it up with Devil's Dyke MM in 1992. They taught me the importance of dancing well and maintaining standards, but also of ensuring that a team works hard for its audience.

As Ring Overseas Bagman since 2012, I've maintained contact with sides from Vancouver to Adelaide, and have danced on special occasions with several of them. By 2022, I'll have done six years as Eastern Area Rep. I'm a huge believer that the reps are the "eyes and ears" of the Officers, and have done my best to ensure that club reactions to any proposals gets back to "senior management".

The Ring can't exist in the modern world without working with the other organisations through the JMO, and our constitutional changes (and the hard work of the Officers) have made this task a lot easier. The Ring seems well placed to continue building on its relationships and developing new ones in the folk world, demonstrating that it can look to the future while still maintaining its links with the original Morris revival. At the same time, we must also listen to our member clubs and ensure they are fully kept up to date about what is going on, including the work of the JMO. I'm putting my name forward as I believe I am well placed to work with everyone to keep the momentum of the last ten years going.

Photograph © Lewis Augustus Elliot

## *Shakespeare Morris*



Personal details redacted for GDPR

Dear Peter

Shakespeare Morris are delighted to propose Nigel Strudwick as the next squire of the Morris Ring. Shakespeare have come to know Nigel really well over many years through his leadership of Devil's Dyke Morris Men, his role as Eastern area rep and overseas bagman. Nigel has shown a huge commitment to the Morris Ring throughout his roles and we have been impressed with his professionalism and dedication in the way in which he has carried these out.

The last couple of years have been difficult for the morris and folk community alike, rebuilding over the next few years is going to be critical for the Morris Ring. Shakespeare Morris believe that having a squire with a strong presence across the country is key. We have been struck by the effort that Nigel goes to in attending days of dance, ales and feasts right the way across the country, usually bringing a number or side of Devil's Dyke with him. Through his leadership of Devil's Dyke Morris Men, his team have regularly attended Ring meetings too. A number of us won't forget Nigel starting off impromptu dancing at the ARM in 2019 and his efforts in organising scratch sides at numerous days of dance have breathed life into these events and we believe as squire, he has the ability and dedication required to breathe life into the Morris Ring too.

Through conversations with Nigel, it's clear that the Ring's presence in the JMO will be in safe hands, as this is something he is passionate about - which is more important now than ever. We believe Nigel is well placed and capable of encouraging new sides and personalities to join and support the Morris Ring too.

Shakespeare Morris are honoured in proposing Nigel Strudwick as the next squire of the Morris Ring

Yours sincerely,

Pat Herlihy

Squire

Shakespeare Morris of Stratford-upon-Avon

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## **Big Jigs application to Full Membership of Morris Ring**

Dear Mr Austin,

I am writing to you in your capacity of Bagman of the Morris Ring.

The membership of Big Jigs decided last year that we would like to upgrade our membership from 'Associate' to full.

I understand that we need to be recommended by a side which is already a full member. As the current Squire of Kemps is also Squire of Big Jigs, and the former Squire of Kemps is also a dancer with us, Kemps Men of Norwich have kindly volunteered to recommend us and hopefully will send you a letter soon.

We would consider it a huge honour to be one of the first mixed sides to be admitted to full membership of the Morris Ring.

I shall request that Kemps write to you as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

*Steve Hickling*

Bagman, Big Jigs

Dear Peter

I am writing to you as Squire of Kemp's Men of Norwich to inform you that we are in full support of Big Jigs in their pursuit of full membership of the Morris Ring. They have danced with us on several occasions as part of our Wednesday evening pub dance outs during the last few years and we have been suitably impressed with their standard of dancing and style of presentation. As a result we see no reason why they should not be granted full membership of the Ring. Three of our dancers are members of the side and dance with them on a regular basis.

Indeed as soon as it was possible for mixed sides to attend Ring events four of them attended the Ring's Jig Instructional in 2020 with beneficial results. They have an accurate knowledge of Cotswold Jigs, and a varied repertoire including double jigs and three and four person dances which leads to an entertaining performance style. All of their members also dance with other sides and they have an experience of the Morris which goes back many years.

We hope that this testimonial will lead to the Ring accepting their application for full membership.

Yours sincerely

Jon Hooton

Squire of Kemp's Men



### **Area Representatives (year of re-election in brackets)**

East Midlands, Charlie Corcoran (2021)

South Midlands, Roger Comley (2021)

Northern, Jono Millward (2021)

North West, David Loughlin (2023)

North East, Brian Pollard (2022)

West Midlands, Matt Turvey (2024)

Eastern, Nigel Strudwick (2022)

South Wales and West, Paul Reece (2023)

South East, Fred Hands (2021)

### **Area Representatives Reports**

#### **East Midlands, Charlie Corcoran**

##### **ALDBURY MORRIS MEN**

The last gasp from the side in action during the previous dancing year was prophetically a downbeat token, delivered by a solo performer representing AMM in a concert in Aldbury Church in mid-December. Then commenced cancellations as another Covid lockdown kicked in: May, a Heath and Reach May Fayre, held over from the previous year; in June, Ashridge House Open Garden Day. The former has already invited us for the 3rd time on 21st May 2022 - fingers crossed. In mid-April matters took a more positive turn with dancing practice for restricted numbers being resumed outdoors in the garden of one of our members as access to halls was still forbidden. We decided to focus on a core of dances and expand the range once restrictions eased. The social aspect of the side with due tankard waving took the form of Zoom sessions.

What a delight it was in July to be able to field a side in sunny Harpenden for an 80th birthday garden party, the feeling of normalcy continuing with a good turnout for other paying gigs at Aston Abbotts Fete and Long Marston.

Thanks to the efforts of our Squire, our pub programme organiser and our annual bike-ride supremo, some standard pub dance-outs and bike-ride delivered dancing at The Half Moon, Wilstone; at the Full Moon, Cholesbury; the Crown & Sceptre, Briden's Camp, the Red Lion Little Missenden, the Rose and Crown in Ivinghoe, The Grand Junction Arms and The Greyhound at Aldbury. We were grateful for the manner in which the pubs had made their gardens accessible with safe access to refreshment. We enjoyed renewing meeting up with our regular Friends of the Morris and other local sides at the shared parade on the 9<sup>th</sup> Oct for Tring Apple Day.

Covid regulations eased sufficiently for us to resume “closed season” regular practice. There was a hiccup: on arriving for our first meeting, we discovered the Hall had been double booked to a film crew shooting “The Lord of Misrule”. Assured this was a horror movie rather than a documentary, we successfully set about gaining parts as paid extras.

We expanded the range of dances once more, just in time to celebrate New Year’s Day outside our remaining home pub - The Greyhound- in Aldbury. To our surprised delight, after checking we would be performing, a previously unknown couple travelled from Woking to watch us as they could trace no side dancing out close to them!

Though this was jolly for us, it is, of course, worrying for Morris in general. We have lost a couple of regular attendees since lockdown but have been lucky enough to attract two new recruits, both experienced dancers. Sadly, again, one is from a side now winding up.

We look forward to dancing for a wedding in early April, with high hopes for 21st May 2022 St Leonards Church, Heath and Reach; 2nd to 5th June 2022 Potten End Village Celebration; TBA September 2022 Waterside Festival Aylesbury. More requests continue to trickle in!

Sticks akimbo for May Day!

John Farthing Bagman to Aldbury Morris Men

#### Anker Morris Men

Team numbers: 20 A couple of those are currently ‘intermittent’. A couple are injured and not dancing. One is an absolute beginner. 2 are musicians only.

Currently practising, and planning a programme for the coming months including several possible bookings.

In 2021: We re-started in June when relaxed restrictions allowed, and managed several pub spots. One of our youngest men got married, and the team danced at the wedding reception.

Our Foreman Tony Ashley died in August, and two other dancers retired during the year due to recurring injury. The team participated in Tony’s funeral early in September, escorting the coffin to the graveside and dancing after the burial, with a notable number of visitors from other Morris teams – a fitting tribute to a man who had been a mainstay of the team for over 40 years. Tony had arranged his 80th Birthday Party for September, and this went ahead at the family’s request, with the local teams including ourselves, dancing during the afternoon.

In November we hosted our Annual Ale, partly in the teeth of the pandemic, with limited numbers invited. It went ahead successfully in spite of some team members and potential attendees not being there thanks to the virus.

On Boxing Day we danced together with some men from Knightlow MM at the Chequers, Bulkington, and sang carols in the pub afterwards.

#### Anstey Morris Men

The current state of the side? One guy didn’t return from lockdown. He didn’t die, he just dropped out.

Did you get anything done last year? We had 4 weeknights in September and a mini tour and evening do.

Are you currently practicing? Yes we are.

What plan do you have for 2022? We're taking it as it comes. I'm not sure yet but will do one-pub nights.

Darren        Former Bagman of Anstey morris

#### Bedford Morris Men

'Bedford Morris Men are back in business !

After a late comeback to practice in July 2021 we decided to extend our practice season into the Summer and our first dance out was in October 2021 at our 'home pub' The Polhill Arms in Renhold nr Bedford. Despite the uncertainty we were able to go ahead with our traditional Boxing day Border programme on Bedford Embankment followed by dancing and the Boars Head ceremony at the Swan Hotel. On January 8th 2022 we danced Border and performed the Abbots Bromley Horn dance at the Dunton Wassail also attended by our friends from Letchworth Morris. Finally on Plough Monday, at very short notice we gathered at the Cock in Broom and performed the Branston Plough Play to a small but very appreciative audience.

We are now back to practice with dance outs planned once a month until May when we will start our Summer pub programme '.

Phil Cooper    Bagman   Bedford MM

#### Brackley Morris Men

Having spent the previous 18 months meeting only on zoom, our first outdoor practices took place towards the end of April on our local pub car park. From May onwards we were allowed back into our practice hall with strict Covid safe measures (all windows open, no figures involving contact, each man keeps his own stick, etc). Our first outing was 5.30am, May Day morning on Brackley Market Place, for which we did no prior publicity, and were of course unable to enjoy our usual beer and breakfast in the pub. From then onwards we took every opportunity to dance out. By keeping our eyes open we were able to invite ourselves to local events such as the local Scarecrow Trail, and Local Vineyard Family Open Day.

We accepted invitations to dance at two care homes on their outside patios and had spots at the 'Brackley Party in the Park' and the 'Buckingham Christmas parade'. We also held our own 'Ale' in November, with 6 or 7 sides or part sides, around 60 of us in all. In all, we achieved a total of 14 events by the end of 2021. 2022 already has a healthy number of potential events in the diary, and the men are all keen get on with a normal morris year.

Stephen Ferneyhough, Bagman, The Brackley Morris Men

#### Dolphin Morris Men

Dolphin Morris continues in good health. We have not lost any members in the last year although we have not seen a couple who are being "covid cautious" for good reasons. We have been joined by a returner to the Morris.

We met socially to chat and play tunes at our "Home" pub when the regulations allowed us to in late spring, taking turns when the rule of 6 applied. As the weather improved we did a few dances

in civvies for the fun of it, to see what we could remember and were fit enough to do. In August we danced out in kit at a few of our favourite pubs. We also attended the Peterborough Morris Ring Meeting. The side was glad to be dancing again.

September saw us meeting to start practising again. The initial focus was to just enjoy the dance and the craic. Attendance was a little patchy at first as members were taking the opportunity to take a holiday and visit family etc. Attendance has settled down and we are now practising as we used to, but focusing on a narrower number of dances.

Martin Morley   Bagman   Dolphin Morris

#### First Class Stamp

First Class Stamp had a relatively good year last year. We managed to keep practising virtually every Monday all throughout lockdown until we were allowed to practise properly again. We did a sensible risk assessment and started with households dancing together which, luckily we are able to do as most of the teams come in pairs. We danced out properly at Peterborough day of dance which was excellent, and again at the memorial do for Tony Ashley which, though a sadder occasion, was also a good do. Since then we have been practising properly and hope to actually get to Sidmouth as the invited side this year - something which has been put off since 2020 as Sidmouth not been happening.

Emma Melville

#### Foresters Morris & Sword Dance Club

In the whole of the year 2020 our only outdoor performance was our Plough Play in January. Since the onset of the virus restrictions our practices have ceased and we have replaced them with weekly Zoom meetings. These have been a good opportunity to keep in touch and talk about those vital topics that would previously have been discussed in the bar after practice - gardening, cooking, ageing sicknesses, and more recently internet connectivity, lockdown and home sheared hairstyles. Many of us are old enough to have already had our first vaccines. The side looks forward to practising, dancing out and visiting pubs as soon as it is legal to do so.

Eric Foxley   Bagman, Foresters Morris Men

#### Hinckley Bullockers

Founder and driving force Tony Ashley died in August 2021, but Emma Melville, then Squire of Anker MM, took up the reins and confirmed all the arrangements Tony had already made, so ensuring the Tour went ahead on January 8th, via Sharnford, Sapcote and Stoney Stanton as usual. The team practised in November and December with a reduced number of dancers, probably due to the pandemic, but was able to make a reasonable showing on the day, in spite of being a couple short due to last minute positive tests for virus. The weather in the morning was appalling, with lots of rain, but dried in the afternoon.

The usual session and supper at the Red Lion, Sapcote at the end of the day was cancelled as the landlord and landlady both had Covid, though they arranged emergency staff for the team's visit in the morning.

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The outline for the 2023 Tour is already in place.

Emma Melville

#### Knightlow Morris

Knightlow have had a good year all things considered. We returned to practice in May, making use of a member's garden for most of the summer. We had representatives at Saddleworth's August day of dance in Uppermill and also were pleased to turn out at the Anker Ale in November. At time of writing we're hoping to do something on Jubilee weekend in Ryton on Dunsmore, but details are as yet to be confirmed.

Our ranks were both depleted and subsequently added to in the past year. We gave a sad farewell at the passing of Tony Ashley, a staunch supporter of the side from the time we started and a much missed figure in the East/West Midlands teams I'm sure. We have been pleased to add a new member to the team who is a complete newbie to Morris and is taking to it very well.

As always, we'll update our friends as events are added to the calendar.

All the best Cheesy Treasurer, KMM

#### Leicester Morris Men

Things proved to be very difficult times for everyone during the Covid lockdown. This was especially true for Leicester where we were in some form of lockdown for well over a year but we maintained contact and some level of fitness through Zoom meetings which included some jig practice in our own homes. On Mayday many of us videoed ourselves as we danced Ladies Pleasure outside our front door or in our garden, these videos being later loaded onto our Facebook page. It's worth noting that one dancer managed to get a fine for dancing without bells!

Following easing of the Covid restrictions in May on the 19th May we had our first practice together for fifteen months in a little-used car park in Thurmaston. During our 'rest' period we were fortunate enough to acquire a couple of new members: one a beginner and the other who had previously danced with Standon Morris. These, along with three recruits from the previous season, are a useful addition of new blood who also considerably lowered the average of LMM! We were lucky with the weather as many other weekly practices followed.

As a result of a request from a retirement community we started on a limited Summer programme on June 30. We chose venues with large outdoor spaces to enable us to keep ourselves and the public safe within the Covid regulations. These outings were greatly welcomed, not only by the pubs and the audiences but also by us. It was wonderful to get out dancing again!! To keep the side on their toes the Squire called a number of dances that we had last danced pre-lockdown and even some from before!! It was good to dance out again but after the lengthy lay-off some felt it more than other the next morning!

Once the Cotswold season has finished, it was time to start practicing Border. During December and January we danced out on four occasions as Red Leicester. The first being the Melton Mowbray Xmas Market. The next was our Leicester City Tour. Our regular Boxing Day stop at The Griffin in Swithland, for which had a marvellous audience. We also performed the Sproxtton Wooing Play at Melton Mowbray and at The Griffin. Our last outing was on the Great Central

Railway, travelling up and down the line from Leicester to Loughborough and dancing at each station. For this we were joined by the Bagman of the Ring! 'Cheesy' was welcomed by all and got involved in a few dances as well!

However, due to the current Covid restrictions our next two opportunities for dancing were cancelled – Whittlesey Straw Bear and the Leicester Morrismen Feast. This has given us an earlier start than normal to start Cotswold practices again, which should lead to a wonderful summer season with many locations already scheduled. Please visit our website to see where LMM are scheduled to dance [leicestermorrismen.co.uk](http://leicestermorrismen.co.uk)

Joe Krych LMM Squire

#### Lincoln & Micklebarrow Morris Men

Lincoln & Micklebarrow Morris Men did not resume public displays until Sept 2021, when we danced at the Lincoln Day of Morris, exactly two years since we last performed in public. We recommenced practice in May 2021 when we were allowed to mix outdoors in Boris's back garden – sorry I am mean in a local pub carpark, which worked well until the nights drew in. We fell out with the pub that allowed us to practice in their function room, so we now practice on a Monday evening 8.30 – 10 at the 7th Newark Scout Group Hut on Lovers lane in Newark (you're welcome to join us if you wish to).

Since the Lincoln day of dance we have also danced at Newark Christmas Market and did the Basingham Plough Play in the pubs in Navenby, south of Lincoln, on Plough Sunday.

Currently we have a few enquiries for bookings for 2022, especially May & June. Number wise we are still low having a total of 10 members (1 musician & 9 men) which we seem to have maintained for the last 10 years or so

Andy Horn, Squire L&MMM

#### Moulton Morris Men

No report received

#### Northampton Morris Men

We did three dance outs last year. Two in pubs in Northamptonshire and at Peterborough day of dance. We began practicing in July outdoors and moved indoors in September. We have a full side at the moment and are continuing to practice and learn new dances.

Paul Melhuish Northampton Morris.

#### Packington Morris Men

No report received

#### Ripley Morris Men

Ripley Morris survive and continue to thrive through weekly Zoom meetings which have served to keep many of our members in touch with each other. Through the good offices of our Squire Alex

Bowness, each session has been topically themed and members have contributed songs, tunes, poems and recitations around the theme.

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

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

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

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

The AGM for 2020 was cancelled as was the annual Ale Feast scheduled for 30th January.

We look forward to receiving the vaccine and returning to normal service before 2022.

Mick Buckley Bagman Ripley Morris

#### Rose & Castle Morris Men

Rose & Castle are still going and trying to get back to normal after the worst of the pandemic.

Early on in the lockdown we did nothing partly because not all our members are IT savvy. However, as time went on we decided to have a go at zoom practices and in keeping it simple for some people we were able to involve everyone who wanted to get involved. By having a single musician playing we were able to practice a number of our dances even though you might get lost in the set sometimes. This would be followed by a chat over a beer. The advantage of doing this was that when we eventually got together again, we hadn't completely forgotten the dances and we kept together as a team.

Once it was possible to practice together outside, this is what we did and fortunately the weather was sufficiently kind to us that we didn't need to go back into our practice hall until last September. We have continually met weekly inside since then taking a LF test prior to practice and providing some ventilation.

We are looking forward to a good year of dancing although we have recently decided to cancel a trip to Marburg that was planned two years ago but postponed as we are still uncertain of the restrictions and don't again want to lose money as a result.

We did have 3 young lads join us before Xmas but one has a broken foot and the others seem to have drifted away. We still have 13 regular dancers with a couple of long distance members and 8 musicians. But none of us are getting any younger and we are always on the look-out for new members.

Ian Welborn Bagman - Rose & Castle Morris

#### **Towersey Morris**

Towersey had scarcely any season but COVID did fail to prevent us from having our normal the last night of our season session, which is to invite guests (2 or 3 sides usually) to our home pub and have a good dance session and a bit of music afterwards. The weather was kind, one side of guests (Border side Armaleggan) was available (luckily, because we'd more or less written off the season so it was all very last minute) and we and a good crowd enjoyed it all.

Our happiest audience though was when we danced as guests of our old friends, Whitchurch's at The Bell in Chearsley. We know the pub well and, whilst it has a good few Morris-receptive regulars, there are also those who take very little notice of us. Not so on this occasion. The number of people who buttonholed us to say how great it was to see the Morris out again and that it gave them faith that one day things would get back to happier pre-COVID days was quite remarkable.

It is highly probable that this was Towersey's penultimate season. We started a women's side in Towersey some 10 years ago and more recently both men's and women's sides have needed each other's help to get a side out. The situation has become so acute that, in order to keep Morris dancing in Towersey alive at all a decision has been taken to amalgamate. If it happens as is planned at present, the existing dancing with members of both sides in almost all the dances will continue until the end of the coming season, when a mixed side will be started in place of the two single sex sides. Sad times.

Paul Dolman (deputising for our Bagman).

#### **The Witchmen**

No report received

#### **South Midlands, Roger Comley**

Letchworth Morris are now a mixed side, and are looking forward to our Centenary Ring Meeting in July. We have invited Alex Hunter's grandson to be on the Top Table.

Whitchurch Morris are also mixed and now have 6 musicians and are a strong side .

#### **Northern, Darren Nugent**

Barnsley Longsword

We are an all-male side dancing longsword and rapper. We practice on alternate Tuesdays at the Barnsley Trades Club. The side currently have 11 dancers and 1 musician (concertina), 2 of the dancers also act as occasional musicians playing the piccolo and penny whistle.

Recently we danced at the Dodworth Firewalk (14/12/21) and at Cawthorn (26/12/21). Though we currently have no events booked we are looking forward to dancing out in 2022.

Regards,

Andrew Cox

Great Yorkshire Morris - No report.

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### Green Oak Morris Men (Doncaster)

Green Oak restarted our weekly Wednesday evening practice during the Summer, 2021, firstly in the outside area at the rear of the Doncaster Brewery Tap and then as the nights became colder and darker inside in the Upper Room. Numbers attending practice have not reached pre-covid levels and there are some members we have yet to see return at all.

On paper we have 11 dancers and 3 musicians, but practice night rarely have 6 dancers and so we have started practicing 3 and 4 man versions of the dances in our repertoire. This is not ideal but at least keeps those who do attend interested.

In September we held a day of dance in Doncaster town centre with two guest sides (which led to us recruiting one new dancer) and during December performed our Mummers Play at "The Jemmy Hirst at the Rose and Crown" in Rawcliffe and at "An Evening with Green Oak" our annual December social event held at the Doncaster Brewery Tap. The collection taken at both Mummers plays being donated to the local cancer charity "Firefly".

We continue to perform Cotswold and Longsword dances and hope to be able to perform over the summer months at local venues. The side agreed at the AGM in October that we would do so with less than six dancers so that the public still are aware of our presence. As yet we have no 2022 programme as we are hoping numbers pick up as restrictions are finally lifted.

In reality we are grateful that we have survived the last two years and are still practicing with the intention to perform in public again.

Cheers,

Martin Johnson

Bagman Green Oak Morris Men of Doncaster (incorporating Doncaster Mummers)

Grimsby Morris - No report.

Handsworth Traditional Sword Dancers - No report.

### Harthill Morris

Harthill Morris have had a few new members – 2 musicians and 2 dancers. This takes us to 28 active members – 10 musicians, 16 dancers and an animal and a fool. Some of the musicians also have a dance or two up their sleeves for resilience. So, we are in a healthy position - becoming a mixed side has made a big difference.

We mainly dance Cotswold.

Our musicians play violin, accordion, melodion, concertina and an ambitious pipe and tabor.

We practice on Thursday nights, September – April, in Harthill Village Hall, Whinney Hill, Harthill, Sheffield. Details can be found at [harthillmorris.org.uk](http://harthillmorris.org.uk) or the Harthill Morris facebook page. The main contact is me, Darren Nugent, at [harthill.bagman@gmail.com](mailto:harthill.bagman@gmail.com).

Recently we have managed to perform at the Kelham Island Victorian Christmas Market and our annual Boxing Day celebrations. For 2022 we have Thaxted, Buxton and Lincoln Big Morris in our sights.

Cheers.

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Darren Nugent, Harthill Morris Bagman.

#### Lord Conyers Morris Men

Early August 2021 we managed to attend our annual pilgrimage up to Robin Hoods Bay – though it was a scaled back we still had very enjoyable weekend. We also performed our traditional Chistmas Wassail & Abbotts Bromley Horn Dance on Saturday 18th December.

We have accepted an invite to dance in Sheffield as part of IVFDF in February then we perform again at May Eve and May Morning.

We are a male only side with 14 members – 3 musicians and 11 dancers only. One dancer also plays a side drum and one who plays a base drum. We have two fiddle players and one melodian player.

We are mainly a Cotswold side but perform our own Longsword & Rapper Dances.

We practice on Wednesday evenings at The Jubilee Sports & Social Club, School Road, Wales Sheffield, S26 5QG.

Side email address: [lordconyers@gmail.com](mailto:lordconyers@gmail.com)

Side website address: [www.lordconyers@org.uk](http://www.lordconyers@org.uk)

Looking forward into 2022 we will have danced in Sheffield as part of IVFDF in February and then we perform again at May Eve and May Morning. We have been invited to perform at The Queen's Jubilee Celebrations, Kiveton Park, in June followed by our walking and dancing tour of Shardlow on 16th July.

Regards,

Peter Yendley, Squire of Lord Conyers Morris Men

#### Spen Valley Longsword

No new members since January 2021.

We have 10 dancers - 7 local and 3 that travel. Dancers are all male.

We have one regular musician (melodeon) with occasional support with accordion, violin and flute. Musicians are mixed gender (though usually female).

A dancer occasionally acts as our beast - "Tyke".

We perform Yorkshire Longsword - Helmsley and North Skelton traditions – and practice at The Wickham Arms Hotel, 15 St. Peg Lane, Cleckheaton, BD19 3SA, on Monday/Tuesday evenings.

Further details via our website: [spenvalleylongsword.org.uk](http://spenvalleylongsword.org.uk)

We were able to perform on Boxing Day 2021 and for 2022 currently have Cleckheaton Folk Festival (2nd July) and Boxing Day.

Cheers,

Dave Webster

Wakefield Morris - No report.

White Rose Morris - No report.

### **North West, David Loughlin**

Report to be submitted

### **North East, Brian Pollard**

Benfieldside Morris and Sword.

Nothing except an occasional Zoom meeting until end of July and into August when we resumed practising outside in a member's field alongside his horses! We were back inside by September. In early November a combined side with the Durham Rams had a marvellous, but cold, weekend of dance with Whitchurch Morris. Plough Sunday in January saw us dancing at Durham Cathedral in celebration where our latest recruit, the youngest at six years old, danced out for the first time! Brian Pollard, Bagman.

Claro Longsword.

Claro Longsword have not danced for nearly two years as the close teamwork of Yorkshire Longsword is incompatible with advice on "social distancing".

We have met for an out- of- doors beer on a few occasions and regularly kept in touch via Zoom. We did, however, on Plough Sunday, take our plough to St. John's Church in Knaresborough for the annual Plough Blessing service and attended in kit.

We plan to do the same at St. Andrew's Church in Aldborough later in January.

In anticipation of subsiding infection rates and some normalisation of life in the Spring, we have put in a request to dance at Thaxted's Ring Meeting in June this year, and look forward to that possibility.

Barry Slaymaker, Bagman.

Durham Rams Morris and Sword

Due to the lockdowns, very little dancing out has been done this year. However we began practices again outside in July 2021, then indoors from early September.

The side still practises Morris with Benfieldside Morris so that the two sides can continue to dance out together with the same repertoire and dancing style. A joint side also practises the rapper dance. This is mainly the Durham Rams dance based on the revival Hamsteels dance of the 1920's. In addition we have recently introduced the Newbiggin Rapper dance and hope to continue to work on the Poppleton Longsword dance.

Our first dance out since lockdown was Durham Plough Sunday on 9th January with Benfieldside. As restrictions are lifted, we hope to dance as part of the Durham City Freeman celebrations and at events in Richmond, Sedgfield and Wharfedale, plus our usual fortnightly dance-outs on Wednesday evenings throughout the summer.

Chris Wagstaffe, Squire.

Redcar Sword Dancers.

Another quiet year with nothing much to report. We had originally planned to restart practices in July 2021 but due to another upsurge in Covid figures this was put back until September.

Prior to this we had been having fortnightly Zoom meetings which in later months included PowerPoint presentations, one for each decade since 1967, at which we reminded ourselves of our past glories (?). Some of which was completely new to our more recent members.

We did, however, manage to perform on Boxing Day in the village of Greatham, near Hartlepool, for the 55th annual revival of the village's longsword dance and play. Albeit to a much reduced crowd due in part to a mixture of the inclement weather and Covid concerns. The village hostelry that hosts us was also much quieter and we did not have the usual post performance singaround. The main thing is that despite the Covid pandemic and the usual old bones and various ailments we haven't lost any members and the team is looking forward to a brighter 2022.

Brian Pearce, Captain.

Richmond on Swale Morris.

As with most morris sides during 2021, Richmond on Swale Morris Men were affected by the lockdowns and were meeting weekly only by Zoom. However, we were able to restart dance practices in mid July and then during August and early September had weekly dances at local hostelrys. Since then, dance practices have continued weekly and we also managed to do our annual Boxing Day dance tour of Aldborough St. John and Richmond. Hopefully, 2022 will be a "normal" dance year – certainly May looks as though it is going to be a very busy month!

Roy Tranter, Bagman.

### **West Midlands, Matt Turvey**

Report to be submitted

### **Eastern, Nigel Strudwick**

After a relative lack of much news over the last couple of years due to the pandemic, I am glad to be able to report much more positive information. I held an online meeting of sides back in November, mainly to discuss the proposed Ring constitution—which was generally favourably received, but a number of comments were passed back to the Officers. Such online meetings between ARMs seem a very good way of keeping in touch given the size of the Eastern Area. The following comments are distillations of what I have been told over the last three months.

Belchamp: had their first dance-out in November 2021 at the Nethergate Brewery and were joined by Little Egypt. Their traditional Boxing Day dance was at the Red Lion at Belchamp Otten. They entertained some of their Colonial cousins from the Americas, who had seen them perform two years ago and felt it was worth the 4000 mile journey just to repeat it. Plough Saturday was spent across the border with the Norwich Kitwitches. Belchamp's most recent excursion was to Ely on the 29th January, where there were eleven Sides and a large group of 8–10 years old who did a

magnificent display – definitely the next generation to continue their traditions. Weather was really good and wherever the Morris went, the crowds followed.

The side has reached a conclusion about the use of black face paint that is acceptable to the majority of members. They would no longer use full face black but members could use whatever colour or design they chose. Hence for their first dance out in Sudbury last September they had a wonderful array of different colours, including the women in the band wearing masks, as usual. On Monday 6th December 2021 they held their first proper AGM for two years. Business was dealt with briskly due to the cold; Kieran Fitzgerald was elected Squire and Cathy Fitzgerald will continue as Bagman.

Big Jigs and Golden Star: Big Jigs have had two dance-outs but are restricting inside activities; Golden Star are practising inside and have had one dance-out.

Cambridge: During the last year or so the Club has been inactive, but at least in the Autumn they were able to meet with their wider members again on an annual basis. In Cambridge they have restarted monthly practices, and from this month fortnightly, and these are attended by a number of younger members who want to extend their Morris activities.

CMM did not go out in the day Molly Dancing on Plough Monday, as they felt that it had too much close contact under the Covid situation; however they again supported the Balsham Plough team in that village for their annual evening . Although parties were limited they gave five or six shows with two sides at some times and felt that life was beginning to get back to near normal. CMM hope to plan various dancing out shows in the summer.

Colchester: resumed practices in the last quarter of 2021 for members with both vaccinations and a Lateral Flow test beforehand. They have done one special event.

Devil's Dyke: after making a (legal) May Day appearance for the Sunday Times, DDMM ran a programme of dance-outs from 1 July to the middle of September. Audiences were very enthusiastic, a feeling almost that "the Morris is back so things must be getting better". Indoor practices have resumed with lots of ventilation with Lateral Flow tests requested, and a full programme is being prepared for 2022. A recruitment campaign will be prepared before the next practice season begins later in the year.

East Suffolk: have one new member. They have performed with good audiences at pubs. Practices were outdoors but are now in the hall. Recruiting is always an issue—the most reliable method is locating people at events etc that express interest.

Good Easter: Good Easter Molly Dancers went out on Plough Monday. It was a splendid day. Now they are back to hibernating in hay lofts on the farms of Good Easter for the rest of the year.

Greenwich: Greenwich Morris Men have resumed dancing out. They danced at a wassail in East Greenwich on January 16th, and the Horn Fair in Charlton in October, with some members of North Wood Morris. They are practising every Thursday evening. The side is rather low on numbers, and has been adapting dances for just four. Efforts at recruitment seem not to be having much success; they speculate that one of the sad consequences of the pandemic is that people have become accustomed to not taking part, to not going out.

Mayflower: are back to some semblance of normality having resumed practising once a week. One or two of their members are isolating but the majority are back. Mayflower hope to have a team of day men at Thaxted and they have a full programme planned for the Summer season, including a day tour along London's South Bank in July and a performance of their Mummer's Play at Paycocks in Coggeshall.

Peterborough: are pretty much back to normal, and have fulfilled several bookings since July 2021. Although recruitment is not brilliant, they do have one new man.

Rutland: had a good spring and summer 2021 with a full weekly dance-out programme from 24th May to early October, and also attended the Peterborough Ring meeting in September. Recruitment has been successful too with two new members joining in September, so numbers are looking OK for 2022. Winter programme has gone well (including fine weather) with border dancing at Christmas events, mummers tour and apple wassails. The side have a busy schedule planned for 2022 including a club trip to Madeira in November with 12 dancers/musicians and 10 partners booked.

Thameside Mummers: As the lockdown eased, the Thameside Mummers were able to start performing again. A few members were reticent to venture forth into public and they adapted some of their plays to have limited cast numbers. A 'new' five-man play made its appearance and was one of the mainstays of their summer season. Most of their gigs were at big events, e.g. Sandringham Food and Drink Festival and for the US Airforce at Lakenheath. These kept the Side's finances in good shape. The number of gigs over Christmas was reduced, but what they did went well. The Side collected over £700 for charity. They performed their 51st Boxing Day play at their spiritual home of The Crooked Billet in Old Leigh. 2022 is their 50th Anniversary year and they have a few special events planned. Their numbers have remained constant, but age and fear of Covid means they have fewer people available.

Thaxted: were faced with a choice, either cancel the next six months' events or embrace the "new normal" and plan to do as much as they can within the rules and shielding their more vulnerable members. They chose the latter and have so far not regretted it. They are blessed with a very strong youth and young men side and this was part of why they chose to carry on. Their weekend of dance is filling up fast, so if any side (all Ring sides welcome) is interested in coming then they should contact me sooner rather than later.

### **Overseas Bagman's report—Nigel Strudwick**

As with the Eastern area, there is much more positive news to report. With clubs ranging in time zones from UTC -8 to UTC +10:30, it is never going to be possible to hold online meetings of sides. However, our overseas members have clearly not been idle, as the following summaries of reports indicate. I've repeated these in some detail as not all UK sides are aware how active the Ring's overseas sides are. Needless to say, the pandemic has meant I have not seen any Overseas side in person for a couple of years.

Helmond: 2021 was a tumultuous year for Helmond Morris Men. First of all, practices and performances were impossible because of Covid restrictions. Then when they were able to practise, numbers were poor, and they were forced to consider closing down. Finally, the decision was made to stop practising from 1 January and to wind up the club and share out the remaining bag. However, five members resolved to continue under the name Helmond Morris Men (rather than Morrisdansgroep Helmond) even if regular practices would be impossible. This gang of five have signed up for the Letchworth Centenary Ring Meeting (where they will be joined by a former member living in the UK). The website is now owned by this group and as soon as restrictions ease (at the time of writing the Netherlands is still under lockdown) they will get together to discuss their future.

Perth: As reported last year, Western Australia has remained virtually isolated from the other Australian states, and from the rest of the world. This has allowed the side to remain virtually Covid-free, and consequently with few impediments to daily life, (other than travel outside WA). PMM continue to dance out, albeit on a limited basis, due to lack of numbers – several members live remotely from Perth. As they no longer have regular practices, their dance repertoire is limited to dances they know well, Adderbury, Bampton and Bledington. They have, however, developed a socially distanced dance called "Covid Hey".

In the past 12 months they danced out at: PICA Bar – a local Perth Bar associated with performing arts; Fairbridge Festival – a 3-day event (think of a mini-Sidmouth, but in the Bush); May Day – dancing up the Sun with Marlee Morris and Mad Tatters in Kings Park overlooking the Swan river; Cottesloe Beach Foreshore – with the Fair Maids of Perth;

Down South Tour – a 3-day tour of wineries and breweries in the south-west of WA;

Cottesloe Beach Foreshore – with the Fair Maids of Perth, followed by a Christmas Lunch at the Albion Hotel.

Pinewoods: held a few outdoor practices in the spring and autumn, but because of restrictions due to the Omicron surge, they did no regular indoor sessions. They danced on May Day with Great Meadows Morris & Sword at Camp Sewataro, a recreational facility in Sudbury, Mass. Both teams did many dances, and friends and family were in attendance. On the day of their AGM (12 June 2021), they met in the morning, danced in downtown Plymouth in the afternoon, and ended up at Independent Fermentations Brewing, also in Plymouth. Their annual Fall Tour was on Saturday,

October 2nd, with Vermont-based Marlboro Morris M [sic]. They danced in Harvard Square in the morning, as usual, but tried a new route in the afternoon, walking from Harvard Square to Davis Square in Somerville, dancing and stopping at a pub along the way. They organised dancers (but did not perform themselves) for two spots in the (Harvard) Christmas Revels, involving auditions, instruction, and selection of the pairs of dancers for the performances. The result was the appearance of the first mixed-gender sets of Morris dancers on the Cambridge Revels stage since the production started in 1971.

Silkeborg: are keeping their heads above water – just. During this last Covid year, they have tried to meet twice monthly when allowed. They managed to dance out for Christmas and were blessed with nice weather, good food and cheap beer. They are hoping for a better 2022.

NOTE TO EDITOR: I WAS SENT A PHOTO OF Christmas in Silkeborg 2021. ANY INTEREST???

Utrecht: have practiced on location but mostly by Zoom. On September 11th, they danced on the Wieldam Castle Fair, and on November 5th in the St Maarten parade in Utrecht.

Vancouver: from January 2021, they were meeting weekly, online, until the end of June 2021, after which they reverted to physical practices OUTDOORS with optional masks. Of their 13 men, two remain self-isolated (i.e. not participating in physical practices) while one other, based nearby in the USA, has pandemic border crossing issues to contend with. Their biggest issue has been maintaining side morale and comradeship during these hard times, and they believe they have managed this reasonably well – indeed, they managed to increase their membership a little!

They only had five public performances during the last 12 months, one in August (Cotswold), one in September (Cotswold), one in November (Welsh Border) and two in December (Welsh Border).

December and January have traditionally been busy times for the side, with Winter Solstice, Christmas, Plough Sunday and wassailing activities. However, this year, they cancelled their January Plough Sunday and wassailing activities (both East Anglian Molly dancing) due to the Omicron virus flare-up in late December. They have also cancelled their annual end-of-January North Shore tour (Welsh Border) for the same reason.

They are considering a physical performance in celebration of Pancake Day (Mar 1) and are actively planning their 40th anniversary ale for the first weekend of July, to which will be invited many Morris sides from the Pacific Northwest, all, of course, subject to local Covid restrictions. VMM comment that on the west coast of Canada, they seem to be taking things a bit more carefully than in the UK...

### **South Wales and West, Paul Reece**

Report to be submitted

### **South East, Fred Hands**

The last year has been a very difficult year for all of us with lockdowns and difficulty finding suitable venues to practice. As a result, the majority of clubs didn't practice until they were able to practice



outside, as the weather improved. Having managed a few weeks of outdoor practice they then went on to run a much reduced, programme for the latter part of the dancing season. Hartley and Wantsum attended Broadstairs Folk week, Chanctonbury attended Bridport Festival, and King John's ran a Jigs instructional daily at The New Forrest Festival. Hartley Held their 2nd annual micropub tour along the North Kent coast, Ravensbourne had a day tour around Bromley and Westerham during the autumn, and Winchester held their annual walking tour of the city, and Greensleeves held a tour in October. St Nicholas At Wade and Sarre Hoodeners had a very successful tour prior to Christmas and raised a substantial amount of money for charity as their annual performance. Most of the clubs that danced out on Boxing Day reported large crowds and good collections, even though it was raining in Kent.

Recruiting has been very difficult during this year, Winchester Wantsum and Ewell St Mary all managed to recruit one dancer each and King Johns had a past dancer return, and Blackheath managed to recruit 2 new dancers, but no other side has managed to recruit. The majority of clubs are reasonably healthy and are operating normally Martlet are now struggling for members and have had to cancel a few shows at short notice because of a shortage of dancers. Wadard are now serious decline, with only a few active dancers. Most of those wishing to continue dancing are dancing with other clubs.

Thames Valley announce that they have moved back to Claygate where the side was founded back in 1952 and will celebrate their 70th Anniversary on July 9th. Hartley will also celebrate their 70th Anniversary in 2022, Ravensbourne Celebrate their 75th Anniversary in 2022 and The Men of Wight celebrate a belated 50th anniversary.

Blackheath tell me that they have recently recorded some film for a Channel 4 programme which is due to be screened soon, more details when I have them.

Harry Taylors Morris by the very nature of the way the club both recruits its members and hold practices has been unable to practice regularly over the Lockdown period and is only just getting back to practice, currently on a bi-monthly basis. This is due to the distances members have to travel to get into Central London to practice. They were unable to dance out at all last season but are hoping to get out and dance soon.

One of the founder members of Martlet Morris is 90 years old soon and is planning to celebrate by dancing a Jig.

## **Morris Ring Publications**

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## **On-line Links:**



The main MR website with millions of pages stuffed to the gunnels with all you need to know about the MR: <https://www.themorrisring.org/>

The Morris Ring Google Group (MRGG). Private Forum for debate or announcements. <https://groups.google.com/group/the-morris-ring>

*Contact the Morris Ring Bagman to register to use.*

Morris Ring Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/TheMorrisRing>

Morris Ring Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TheMorrisRing>

## **Call for Contributions**

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

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

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

