SQUIRE: Nigel Strudwick
3 Town Farm Close, Whaddon, Royston SG8 5RT
Email: squire@themorrisring.org

BAGMAN: Peter Austin, 8 Pease Close, Warwick
Warwickshire, CV34 7BA
Tel: 01926 339351
Email: bagman@themorrisring.org

TREASURER: Clayton Francis
Tel: 0208 3957821
Email: treasurer@themorrisring.org

Newsletter No. 133
February 2024

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2nd Mar  
**Annual Representatives Meeting 2024**
*Back to Cannock we go! Featuring election of the next squire and any other business that can be identified. Post-AGM workshop to be run by Handsworth Traditional Sword Dancers. Booking form available on website as PDF, if Word version required, please email bagman@themorrisring.org.*

13th Apr  
**Joint Morris Organisations’ Day of Dance 2024 (Newark)**
*In 2024 the day of dance is hosted by Trentside Holmes Morris on behalf of The Morris Federation and supported by Lincoln & Micklebarrow Morris Men (The Morris Ring) and Rattlejag Morris. BOOKINGS OPEN! Please email: newarkjmo2024@gmail.com*

27th Apr  
**Cambridge Morris Men, Centenary Spring Day of Dance (Ring Meeting 368)**
*A walking tour of Cambridge with a massed show on one of the city’s fine parks (TBC with the council). Spaces are likely to go quickly so book today! Sadly, a Feast looks unlikely -- most colleges already booked up. Booking enquiries to CMMRingMeeting2024@gmail.com*

31st May - 2nd Jun  
**Thaxted Annual Weekend of Dance**
*The fabulous Thaxted weekend of dance will be held on its traditional weekend in 2024. All sides and members from the Morris Ring are welcome to apply to attend if not directly invited, this is regardless of gender profile of the dancers or musicians, all will be most welcome. We will also be inviting representatives’ sides from the Morris Federation. Numbers may be limited so early booking is essential to avoid disappointment. Enquiries to revansandson@sky.com*

10th Aug  
**Stratford-upon-Avon Day of Dance (Provisional Ring Meeting 369)**
*Shakespeare Morris invite you to celebrate their 65th Anniversary and the 90th Anniversary of the Morris Ring with a Day of Dance in Stratford-upon-Avon, ending the day with a feast. Initial expressions of interest to: 'shakespearemorris@gmail.com'. We'll confirm prices and a full schedule over the next couple of months.*

23rd – 25th Aug  
**Saddleworth Rushcart (Provisional Ring Meeting 370)**
*Saddleworth Morris Men invite all interested persons and sides to attend the Rushcart in 2024, on Friday 23rd August to Sunday 25th August (the Bank Holiday weekend). For more details contact Jonny Frankel (Rushcart Secretary) saddleworthmorris@gmail.com*

28th Sept  
**Peterborough Morris Day of Dance (Provisional Ring Meeting 371)**
*Currently a placeholder, hoping to finalise details soon.*
From the Bagman’s Desk

The ARM approaches once again. All sides should have all received details of elections etc; please bear in mind that only full member sides may vote in elections. See below for reports.

This winter has been quiet for me from a morris perspective, but I still managed to get a tour in with the Original Welsh Border Morris Men just before Christmas. As ever a wonderful tour with some great company. Over Christmas I was rendered inoperable by this dreaded cold doing the rounds, and much to my chagrin missed Jockey’s Plough Tour and Stafford’s feast. I’m pleased to report though that my health recovered relatively quickly once I shook it off.

I’m writing this missive after getting back from the Jigs Instructional in Sutton Bonnington, which was good as ever. This year was a new format as a one-day workshop rather than the weekend, this made the day more intense, but we did get everything done. It was well attended with a lot of new faces; in review I say it’s well worth the trip if you fancy fine-tuning your jig skills. Hopefully, next year’s dates will be announced at the end of the summer.

As ever, please let me know about anything you’d like the membership of the Ring to be aware of, be it events, significant milestones or more unusual items of interest. These newsletters don’t just write themselves!

As will doubtless be mentioned elsewhere, the Ring is turning 90 years old this year. If you fancy giving your day of dance a bit more joie de vivre by making it a 1-day Ring meeting, please get in touch. We recognise that weekend meetings are very difficult to organise and so are actively encouraging teams to consider smaller scale events which are more manageable with fewer volunteers.

I look forward to seeing some of you at the ARM, and hopefully more of you as the year progresses.

Cheesy
Notices

Event Hosts
The Morris Ring has responsibility for hosting the JMO Day of Dance in April 2025. We are seeking a team willing to lead the organisation of the event, with support from other local teams and officers from all 3 morris organisations. If you are interested in helping out, please identify yourselves to the Bagman asap.

Dartington Morris Day of Dance – 14th September 2024
Dartington Morris will be organising their Day of Dance on the above date in Totnes. The format will be a walking tour of Totnes with groups of 3 sides dancing at each spot; timings will be 11:00 start and 15/16.00 ish finish, with sides using local establishments and market stalls for food and refreshment. We encourage sides to come by public transport, if possible, but there is all day parking. For more details contact bag@dartingtonmorris.uk

Ebor Morris Turn Golden
In 2024 Ebor Morris will be celebrating our 50th birthday! One of our celebratory events will be a weekend in Seahouses, Northumberland, for all current and former members, 11th to 14th May 2024. We will also have a day of dance in York, probably mid-June, and an anniversary dance out on 1st May in Poppleton, the precise anniversary and location of our first public appearance.
Please get in touch emailing ebor.morris@outlook.com if you're interested in attending - we are hoping to make the weekend in Seahouses FREE for all current and former Ebor Morris men.
Thanks
Kevin Holland
Ebor Morris Bagman

Morris Ring Zoom account
A reminder to all sides that we have a dedicated Morris Ring Zoom account for online video conferencing. If anyone would like to use this Zoom account to host an online event, then please get in touch. Please ensure that any such event is appropriate to the aims of the Morris Ring and is also conducted with these aims in mind.

Candidates for Election to Squire of the Morris Ring
Candidate 1 – Emma Melville, Anker Morris Men

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 four years, have been Anker’s squire. I am now their Bagman.

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 was 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.
Nomination of Emma Melville as Squire of the Morris Ring by Saddleworth Morris Men

As a side we have known Emma since she started to attend Saddleworth Rushcart with her parents Mike & Cynthia Garland and Brother Adam in the 1980’s. Since then, she has been a regular attender both as a spectator and musician for Anker MM, Dolphin MM, and others, and more recently Knightlow MM a side local to her that she has helped from its inception. She has also helped organise and lead the band of Morris musicians at the Rushcart Sunday Church service.

We believe it is as Squire of Anker MM and organiser of Anker’s 2015 Ring meeting, as a dancer with First Class Stamp (an Appalachian team who joined the Morris Ring in 2019 as full members) that Emma has shown her qualities: a supporter and facilitator of sides in her region, an ambassador for Morris Ring membership in the wider Folk dance world, and an engaged and committed supporter of the values the Morris Ring works to promote - most recently shown as a member of the Squire’s commission on Constitutional reform.

The morris world is ever changing and evolving, the challenges presented by Covid being the most recent pressing issue. The qualities that a person brings to being Squire, and to those challenges, is what matters most.

Saddleworth believe that Emma has the right experience, skills and grounding in the Morris Ring to meet the challenges and we nominate her for Squire of the Morris Ring.

Saddleworth MM – October 2023
Candidate 2 – Clayton Francis, East Surrey Morris Men

Dear Morris Ring,

I am declaring my candidacy for Squire of the Morris Ring. As current Treasurer, I have dedicated the past five years to upholding the values and traditions of morris dancing, and am confident that my experience, expertise, and unwavering commitment to our shared passion will enable me to lead the Morris Ring during my tenure.

I have successfully spearheaded significant transformations, including the implementation of a web-based subscription and administration platform. Furthermore, I played a pivotal role in securing the waiver of membership fees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

My vision for the Morris Ring is one that blends reverence for our rich heritage with a proactive approach to adapting and expanding our reach. I envision a future where the vibrant spirit of Morris dancing permeates many communities, attracting new enthusiasts for this great tradition.

Collaboration is paramount in achieving these goals. By strengthening our ties with the Open Morris and Morris Federation through the JMO, we can harness our collective strengths and magnify the impact of morris dancing on a broader scale. By pooling our expertise and resources, we can elevate the visibility of morris and introduce its enduring beauty to a wider audience.

I am confident that we can preserve the essence of morris dancing while simultaneously expanding its reach and impact on generations to come.

I am honoured to have served the Morris Ring and hope to further the legacy of this cherished dance tradition.

Yours sincerely,

Clayton Francis

ESMM
Peter Austin
Bagman
The Morris Ring
8 Pease Close,
Warwick, Warwickshire,
CV34 7BA

Dear Peter

On behalf of Greensleeves Morris Men I am writing to propose Clayton Francis of East Surrey Morris Men as next Squire of the Morris Ring.

Greensleeves and East Surrey have been associated for many years, dancing together regularly at their Peasmarsh Weekends and other occasions, and as a consequence have got to know Clayton and his colleagues well.

Having danced with East Surrey for over 20 years Clayton has high standards of dancing and a strong affection and awareness of the morris traditions and history, and he is keen to continue working together with the other morris organisations to showcase these and take them forward. His time as Club Bagman and Ring Treasurer has given him wider experience and knowledge, and with his personality and communication skills we feel he has the attributes and dedication necessary for this important position.

Neil Barrett
Squire
Greensleeves Morris Men
Area Rep Elections 2024

North East

After 30 years of service, Brian Pollard has decided to step down from his North-Eastern area rep role. Brian is currently the longest serving member of the Advisory Council and his stalwart support with various matters over the years has been invaluable. The officers of The Morris Ring sincerely thank Brian for his service and wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Barring the emergence of any other candidate, Nick Appleyard his kindly volunteered to take over from Brian. Nick takes up the rest of his introduction.

I am Nick Appleyard and I have been involved with morris dancing for as long as I can remember. Starting out in about 1974 when I went with my dad to Saturday afternoon practice sessions with the (now demised) Stockton Morris Men.

As soon as I was old enough, I started dancing with the Street House Morris Men a side I have been associated with ever since through its various changes.

As my working life took me to various parts of the country, I spent time with different sides including a very short spell Chingford MM an even shorter spell with Castleford Longsword. Sadly, I think I actually only danced out with both of these teams once. I spent a longer period dancing with Longshore and First Light Morris in Lowestoft, the only time I ever danced North West.

Currently I am a member of Richmond on Swale Morris Men, Goathland Plough Stots and Black Diamond Mixed Cotswold Morris
South Midlands

Roger Comley has served 21 years as Area Rep for the South Midlands, the Ring Area with the highest concentration of sides who can trace their origins back to before the morris revival of the early 20th century. He has now indicated his willingness to stand down, although we know he will still be making his distinctive presence felt at morris events everywhere. The officers of the Morris Ring sincerely thank Roger for his service and wish him and Pam all the very best!

Barring the appearance of other candidates, Geoff Pitt has indicated his willingness to take over the role in the short term, and we are very grateful to him. He will be known to very many of our sides, so let him introduce himself in his own words:

*I am a member of Letchworth Morris, Original Welsh Border MM and an honorary member of Cambridge MM.*

*I first started dancing when I joined Letchworth Morris Men when the side was rebooted by Morris Sunderland in 1989. I first danced out with the team that year at the Thaxted Ring Meeting and have been to almost every Thaxted meeting since. I have attended at least one other Ring meeting each year travelling the length and breadth of the country and as far as Australia to the Adelaide meeting in 2013. I am also a keen attender of ales, days of dance and JMO events organised by teams from all three Morris organisations.*

*I am delighted to have been elected as squire of Letchworth a number of times. I have taken an interest in the running of the Morris Ring and have attended ARMs on many occasions.*
Draft Agenda for the 2024 Morris Ring Annual Representatives’ Meeting

1. Attendees and apologies

2. Minutes of the 2023 meeting
   (https://themorrisring.org/files/docs/bagmans-newsletter/bagmans-newsletter-no-130-april-2023_0.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
      i. Question from Mersey Morris re Reserves
   d. Chairman of the Advisory Council
   e. Morris Ring Archive Group
   f. Webmaster and publications
   g. Overseas Bagman

5. Election of Squire – see Bagman’s Newsletter 133 for candidate statements

6. Nominations for Full membership
   a. Golden Star Morris
   b. Flowers of Ilmington Morris

7. Area Representatives’ Reports

8. Future events

9. Date of next meeting

10. 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
So now my first year is past as Squire. One of the things I have seen over the years as I’ve been following the Ring’s goings-on is that there is always going to be something come at Squires that they don’t expect. So far, they have been minimal for me, but one never knows what is coming down the road. The principal surprise for me was literally “down the road” as I was hit while cycling by a car right at the beginning of the dancing season and could not dance for most of that season, although it didn’t stop me from carrying out Ring and JMO duties.

One thing I wanted to do was to use the easy ability we have now to get information out to sides to keep in touch with clubs as regularly as I could. So, I’ve tried to update everyone on news and where I’d been, as well as to mention things that everyone needs to think about, whether they be dancing or music, or administrative things like the Trust Registration Service (TRS) regulations.

JMO: a surprise I did receive was finding out that for the calendar year 2023, the rotating chairmanship of the JMO fell to the Ring, and with my taking over at the ARM in March, it made great sense that I begin this by taking the chair at the February meeting when I was still Squire Elect. I have to thank everyone on the JMO Committee for their help and support in getting me up to speed during the year, especially the heads of the Morris Federation and Open Morris, Pauline Woods-Wilson and Jen Cox.

JMO business did take up a lot of my time last year. An idea proposed at the February meeting was to celebrate 20 years since the morris exemption from the Licensing Act 2003, and I spent a considerable amount of time dealing with this. As you all know, there was a series of Day of Dance events around the country (Belper, Norwich, Chester, Bath and Newcastle) ending with one in London, for which we were able to get Trafalgar Square as we did in 2003, although only for three hours. I attended four of these events, meeting lots of sides from the Ring, Fed and Open for the first time, and I would like to thank the organisers of all of them from the three organisations who made them possible. We knew that getting Trafalgar Square would be hard work and take a long time, but the persistence of the London lead team (New Esperance) was rewarded some ten days before the event (apparently it was two days before in 2003). We were able to get Lord Redesdale to be there, as he was key in proposing the exemption in 2003, and the heads of the Ring and the Open at that time were also present (Cliff Marchant and Chris Hall), as was John Bacon’s widow Ann (John was the President of the Fed in 2003). A collage of images from both events by Jess Searle (Morris Fed) is below.
It’s important to stress the significance of the three organisations working together. The JMO started not long after Trafalgar Square in 2003, initially prompted by shared insurance needs, but has continued to develop, and the most important result has been the building of trust and friendship between three organisations which, while all with morris at their heart, are quite different.

Something that you will be hearing more about is the JMO’s EDI (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion) group. Ed Worrall was our rep on that, but he wished—after very long service—to stand down, and I was able to replace him with Paul Redhead (Devil’s Dyke) and also expand the Ring’s representation to two persons, in line with the other two orgs; that second person is our West Midlands area rep, Matthew Turvey (Shakespeare). Sides will already have come across the survey this group did regarding aspects of folk songs, and there is more in the pipeline.

As insurance is one of the most important things that sides get via the JMO, I ought to mention that Michael Stimpson (Phoenix), who has organised that insurance as long as I can remember, is intending to stand down. He has done an incredible job for all of us, and our profound thanks are due to him. His latest achievement is to include personal accident insurance into the policy, so that individuals will no longer have to apply for it separately. I am pleased to say that I have been able to get Chris Dent (Peterborough) to work with Michael with the aim of taking over the role in the near future.
Events: we had one Ring Meeting last year, Saddleworth Rushcart, which has long been an important part of the annual morris activities for Ring sides. It went well, wasn’t very wet, and the proverbial good time was had by all. We certainly need to support the ‘Cart as since 2014 Saddleworth MM have had to take on paying for the traffic control, a major financial outlay, and income still has not returned to pre-Covid levels although these traffic costs have increased dramatically.

I won’t list all the events I’ve been to as most summer ones got mentioned in my periodic musings, and others appear above under the JMO, but they have all given me the chance to meet sides whom I’ve never met before. I should note that my recent trips to the West Midlands area included a visit to Uttoxeter’s feast—I went particularly to offer the Ring’s support for a side that had been putting out a social media blitz about the need to recruit or fold. My visit was shortly after the local media got hold of this story and a couple of short filmed pieces about them had been on BBC and ITV, as a result of which they’ve had no fewer than 16 possible recruits through the doors in the last ten days of January, and a couple of other sides have also had enquiries prompted by the media coverage.

I ought to mention, however, that I did attend three sad events last year, the funerals of three very significant Morris men: Vic Martin (Foresters) and Derek Pace and Mike Harnett (Rutland). All three made very major contributions to their sides and will be missed. RIP.

Recruitment is key to the continued health and vitality of all sides, and the example of Uttoxeter should inspire us all to keep at it. The officers are happy to advise clubs that need help with their recruitment programme.

Archives: since my professional interest often involves time in archives, I have done my best to support and keep abreast of what the MRAG is doing. I need to express my thanks to Chris Wildridge for his hard work as seen in his report and apologise publicly to him that other morris duties have prevented me from devoting the amount of time I would have liked to the MRAG.

Next year: My first year has very much been a settling-in period, one for getting to know the ropes, and so on. In the course of the next year, I think it is time that we review how the 2022 constitution and supporting documents have fared in the light of experience of a couple of years that include an election cycle. I intend to work with the other officers to look them all through and come up with some thoughts, and clubs will be asked for their thoughts prior to any changes being proposed at the 2025 ARM.

Thanks: I finish by thanking everyone for their kindness, friendship and hospitality in the last 12 months. I want to make a special mention of Ed Worrall who will be retiring from the Advisory Council this year after serving continually on it since 2009. During much of that time, he has also served on the JMO Committee in various roles. The Ring and the JMO have a huge amount to thank him for. I must not forget to thank our area reps who are the eyes and ears of the Ring and are essential in our communication with teams. Lastly, and above all, I wish to express my gratitude to Peter Austin and Clayton Francis for helping me during this rapid learning experience; we have been able to create an excellent working relationship.
Bagman’s Report

Well, here we are again! It never ceases to amaze me how quickly we seem to be at the time of year where I’m writing my report for the year. And what an extraordinary year it’s been. Before moving into the year in review, I must again thank the wonderful group of people behind the scenes who make things like Ring meetings, JMO Days of Dance and make important things like the website run, making my job easier in the process.

2023 has been a good year for morris in general in many ways. Lots of events both old and new have been occurring. Many sides have celebrated significant milestones in the last year, among them Leicester Morris who passed the 70-year mark. The year ahead sees the Ring turn 90 in October, while Cambridge Morris Men mark their centenary. We have also had a lot of positive media coverage on multiple platforms, which hopefully will yield more recruits and local support in the times to come.

From an administrative level, a few things have occurred of note. The most significant milestone was in April when Martin, our ever-patient website designer and host, transferred the website to a new platform and updated the website for us in the process. This was done using feedback provided by side representatives through a survey sent out before the 2023 ARM, and we thank all those who responded. We hope the website changes have made it more accessible and easier to use.

In terms of events, I could list off a long reel, but I’ll stick to my own personal highlights. In February I was the guest of Kennet Morris Men at their ale in Bracknell, a most convivial affair. The JMO in Exeter in April was also great fun, in spite of foul weather, and the Ring was very well represented at the event. The usual May mêlée followed, then June where I attended the Evesham Morris Weekend with Jockey and saw a good variety of teams in attendance from across the morris community. August was very busy for me: to open proceedings I attended Leicester’s 70th Anniversary Tour, which defied very damp conditions to be a wonderful way to mark this milestone. This was followed a week later with a visit to Broadstairs Folk week with Taylor’s, then a jolly down to South London for Croydon Night of Dance, in turn followed by a long weekend trip to Belgium with Jockey. To round the fortnight off, I was back up to Saddleworth for yet another fantastic Rushcart. Needless to say, I was sad to get back to the job after such a packed fortnight of morris.

I was privileged to attend the Morris Federation AGM in late September as the guest of the Federation officers. Held at Bishop’s Castle in Shropshire, it was great to mix with a completely new set of people, though one or two familiar faces were present which was very pleasing. History was made on Sunday when, at the invitation of the Federation president, I danced a jig for the company, the first time a serving Ring officer performed such an act. As I remarked previously, it is a milestone in the Morris Ring’s relationship with the Federation which I hope we can continue to build upon.

In that regard, I’d like to add my own thanks to the Ring teams who led or supported the organisation of the regional days of dance to mark 20 years of the JMO. They were excellent
events across the board, and a good showcase of how we can work together to forward our common goals. The Morris Ring are responsible for organising the 2025 JMO Day of Dance, so we are looking for a host team to lead this - if you’re interested, please let me know.

In terms of other future events, we always need teams who would be interested to host Ring meetings. Regular readers will know that this is a permanent standing request in my newsletters, but it helps us to bring teams together to celebrate the friendship of morris from which the Ring derives its greatest strength. As has been mentioned before, we actively encourage teams to try different formats with Ring meetings as we recognise the more traditional weekend events can be a challenge for smaller sides and that the availability of suitable buildings to use as bases is very variable.

Meanwhile, looking ahead, it is the intention of both the Squire and myself to formalise some of the less clear procedures to help clarify how certain things should happen. We recognise that following the constitution updates in 2022 that there are some gaps in our operational procedures which need to be resolved to ensure the long-term success of the Morris Ring. This is primarily to help make these processes clearer to teams who wish to make use of them, but also to assist the transition between officers. We also wish to review how we can make the Ring accessible to more sides and hope to be in a position to dedicate time to this over the next year. We welcome input into all these things from any interested parties, and we hope to present several options at the 2025 ARM.

It is also my personal intention to also get the sale of bells and black handbooks back online before mid-summer this year (2024). I wish to express my regret that we have not been able to make this happen yet, though I will say it has not been for lack of trying. We have met several roadblocks with this during the post-Covid period that have slowed the process of resuming sales, but I am hopeful that these are now nearly all resolved and that teams can resume purchases soon. I recognise and appreciate the patience of the many teams and individuals who have been waiting for more progress on this. If all plans come to fruition, this patience will not be in vain.

On a more positive note, I wish to thank all teams for their continued support of the Ring. We recognise that a lot of teams are not fussed about politics or national organisation, but as officers we ultimately hope to serve your best interests for the long term. I mention this as the UK government has (finally) ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. This will hopefully get morris officially listed as part of the intangible cultural heritage of the UK for the first time, and we hope this will open new avenues of opportunity for everyone in the long term. As officers, we are engaged with our counterparts in the Morris Federation and Open Morris to make sure morris in all its forms is able to take advantage of this long-awaited milestone.

I wish all teams a good season and look forward to seeing most of you out and about.

Peter Austin, Bagman, The Morris Ring
Treasurer’s Report

2023 Morris Ring Treasurer’s Report to the Morris Ring ARM
3rd March 2024

1 Introduction

This is my 6th Treasurer’s Report and probably my last. At the time of writing, the 2023 accounts have nearly been completed and will be published. Still, I can confirm that our underlying finances are very sound and for another year I have no intention of changing the current subscription structure.

2 Membership

Standard renewal fees were unchanged.

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Early payment reduction if completed by November 30th.

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3 Insurance

Our insurance cover that is arranged as part of the JMO hasn’t been finalised for 2024. This year we are including individual Personal Accident Insurance as part of the cover offered to sides. Hopefully, this will be resolved soon after the time of writing this report.

4 Classes of Membership

Our 2023 membership renewals for 2024 consist of.

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Several sides have folded so the accuracy of the membership is in question and overall membership is down slightly. Steven Archer has offered to assist in getting a more accurate picture of the membership which is greatly appreciated.

5 Ring Finances

The Shop - didn’t attend any events in 2023. We hope to resolve its status and have it back on a sounder footing in 2024.
Archive Fund – continues to support this important work.
Youth Fund – continues to be supported thinly by the membership.

Donations - £1000 to the Doc Rowe Documentary production & £80 to the MDDB

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

The Cashless Refund Programme was taken up by a further 20 sides where the Ring refunded up to £100 for the purchase of a card reader. £1553.54 was refunded. £2655.89 was refunded last financial year making £4209.34 in total. This equates to an average refund of £73.85. The programme is running till the 2024 ARM.

5 General policy and financial reserves

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

6 Future Plans

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

We transferred the website to a new platform during 2023 which offers a more future-proof base with greater flexibility than previously available. Natty Web Developments will be delivering future improvements over time.

Our reserves on deposit (£62,700) are sitting there. If anyone knows of any safe financial vehicles that can give a good rate of return with access, I would be more than willing to listen to them.

Regards,

26th January 2024

Clayton Francis
Treasurer
The Morris Ring
Chair of the Advisory Council’s Report
We met twice during the year. Once directly after the ARM and again in October 2023. The October meeting was done via Zoom. It worked reasonably well despite a couple of hiccups. I think these will resolve themselves in time.

After the last few years things seemed quiet however there always seems to be something hiding round the corner. This year it has been The Trust Registration Service. Thank you to Ed Worrall for the work he has put into this and please don’t ignore it. It is not going away and may well bite you in the bum if you do.

Next year is the Morris Ring’s 90th anniversary. Various ideas to celebrate this were discussed and no doubt the officers will inform you of these when the time is right. However, an organisation is only as strong as its membership so if you have any ideas, fancy running a small Ring Meeting or DoD in celebration of our birthday please contact the Squire, Bagman, or your Area Rep. Don’t be shy.

Ring Meeting are perennial issue these days. We all know the difficulties in running one in a traditional style but again don’t be shy to talk to the officers to hear their ideas or perhaps tell them you want to run one but need some guidance. Hopefully, I will see many of you during the course of the year.

Keep on dancing

Pete Simpson
Chair of the Advisory Council
Morris Ring Archive Group Annual Reports 2023

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
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Introduction

This report covers activities of the Group for the period from the ARM 2023 onwards.

The report from Geoff Douglas is of significance to the Morris Ring but this year will also mark a notable event outlined in Duncan Broomhead’s report, his relinquishment of the role of Keeper of the Photographic Archive.

MRAG Meetings 2023

The Group meeting took place at the ARM in March 2023. The annual report was submitted to the Officers and the ARM.

Chairman’s report

In September 2023 Geoff Douglas and I met with Chris Lambert to discuss the Validation Exercise. Geoff’s report covers this more fully. An up-to-date verbal report will be made at the ARM in March.

Morris Ring Archivist: Paper and Film – Geoff Douglas

A small team of volunteers have begun the process of auditing the contents of each box in the Morris Ring Archive in the Essex Record Office. It is anticipated that it will take a considerable time.

The process involves comparing the material present in each box to that recorded in Chris Metherell’s database. Since starting on 15th September 2023, the team have verified over 250 documents.

In preparing for this project negotiations with ERO staff were required. Special provisions have been agreed with the ERO for access to a room where volunteers can speak freely to one another [not usual in a record office search room]. The usual practice is for documents to be supplied individually or in small numbers. Agreement has been arranged for material
to be supply box by box to allow the volunteers to work effectively on processing our material.

Working from Chris Metherell’s excellent data the Chair has been working to adapt it to the structures required to publish the contents of the Morris Ring Archive on the Essex Record Office’s online catalogue.

A log of time committed to the project is being maintained by the Essex Record Office. Not including ERO staff time 45 hours have been spent examining each document and listing it. Some directly match Chris Metherell’s data. Others, listed for the first time expand on a single listing, e.g. Pruw Boswell: Manuscript Collection from one entry to thirty. In addition, the Chair has spent 16 hours formatting the data to comply with the ERO’s cataloguing requirements. A total of 61 hours.

Keeper of the Log books – Charlie Corcoran

I have received nothing new to add to the Log Books for several years. It has to be up the side(s) organising Morris Ring events to provide the stuff.

Photographic Archive Report 2023 - Duncan Broomhead

It has been another busy and varied year for the Morris Ring Photographic Archive. In addition to the regular job of providing photographs and information, I have catalogued over 5,000 photographs donated by John Frearson, ex Bagman of the Ring.

I have also catalogued the two new folders of Pruw Boswell’s notes and photographs, adding them to her magnificent collection. Pruw has also given permission for Tony Dann, a well-respected researcher and dancer, to draft a new book about Lancashire Morris, he will integrate Pruw’s research with some of his own. I have provided Tony will copies of all the information he needed.

In December, 1,200 colour slides taken by the late Dave Bloomfield, were donated to the Archive. Sorting, cataloguing, and digitising them, will be a job for 2024. I have bought a new film & slide scanner and can resume making digital copies of the paper prints in the Archive.

Finally, I have decided that I will stand down as the Keeper of the Photographic Archive in 2026.

Morris dance database report for the Morris Ring - January 2023 – Colin Andrews

From the number of email queries, I have received over the past year, the MDDB seems to be gaining increasing recognition both from morris dancers and the general public. Although the number of sides who have requested team editorial access has increased, the number with such access still remains well under half of all the sides listed, and the goal of having the database always up to date through the input of every team is yet to be achieved. No major changes in the structure of the database have been made over the past year but some modifications have been made as a result of suggestions by users. The year of formation (and demise) of a side can now be shown.
Particularly important for teams which cease to operate is a facility for sides to indicate where team archives can be found.

New links have been added both in the general section for connecting to other morris related organisations and websites, and more specifically in the sources of information for historic teams (generally those defunct for at least 100 years). Duncan Broomhead has kindly supplied archive photographs and information about old North West sides in Cheshire & Lancashire. There is now a list of Carnival Morris groups available.

The continued sponsorship by the Morris Ring is greatly appreciated in maintaining the website.

**New Dance Co-ordinator report – January 2023 – Colin Andrews**

There has been relatively little activity over the past year regarding new dances from Ring sides. The Google sheet 'New Morris Dance Records' shows the information which I hold. I have tried to encourage those sides which have made up their own dances to deposit a copy of the notation with me, or, for sides affiliated to the Federation or Open Morris, with the appropriate officer. This is particularly important for sides which have ceased to operate, since dances could so easily be lost forever. I am at present in negotiation with the composer of the Horsham dances in order to supplement the 3 Horsham dances already on file.

**Sword Dance Archive Report 2021 – Phil Heaton**

The Sword Archive continues to be useful to the Sword teams and various students of the art. Various notations of both Rapper and Longsword have been requested and supplied, especially popular are the 5 person dances from North Yorkshire.

Offers of swords from older teams not now using them means that new teams of which there are many, can use both the wooden swords and both the steel and Rapper swords being handed over.

**Web Editor’s Report**

The new platform for our website went live, on schedule and to budget, at the beginning of April last year. As ever, Martin Jones (Dartington Morris), managed the transition seamlessly. We took the opportunity to update some photos and links (you may have noticed them added to your side’s page) and made some other improvements, especially sides’ ability to maintain all their published information, which I’m sure you are all doing ...

The need for an upgrade with the introduction of Drupal 9 was identified by Natty Web Development in early 2021. Several options were considered as Martin gained experience of other upgrades and at his suggestion we agreed that Backdrop CMS would be our preferred choice. It wasn’t until January 2023 that we made a formal request for the upgrade and Martin’s proposal was accepted formally in early March. We had decided on a non-competitive tender as researched alternatives were deemed impractical and definitely uneconomic.
10 days later we “froze” the web-site, leaving it fully accessible. A development site was created within a day and a day later we were able to carry out a review. The conversion included a number of new features requested by our membership from a survey we had undertaken. We were able to identify some issues quickly – though most had already been spotted by Natty. A week after freezing the site we had completed a final review of all pages. All issues were painlessly dealt with – for example backdrop managed images in a different (but improved) way and this had created some anomalies. Sharing pages to Facebook was another challenge given some limitations Facebook had introduced on linked images, but this was quickly overcome, though is still a challenge. Before the end of March we were able to consider the development site as our new live site and switch over was completed seamlessly. We continued to update and test on the various platforms and devices our membership uses and by 4th April we considered the upgrade implemented in full. A week later, having created the necessary user guides and publicity, we were able to “launch” the site to our members and the public at large. It has been very well received. I hope the Web Editor’s newsletters helped keep you informed and that you all received updated User Guides – and found them useful.

We have been using the Backdrop site now for nearly a year without any significant issues, other than Martin implementing a few “nice to haves” belatedly requested. We have found the new platform crisper and cleaner and still exceptionally easy to use and manage. We refer to it as our Shiny New site – a very apt description. My favourite description of Martin is equally apt: Hero!

One additional “service” we agreed to offer was to publicise sides’ days of dance using our events feature or creating an article, which has been well received.

The good news and bad news. Google analytics, which provided the data for previous reports migrated to a new system in July so the graphs and data are inconsistent for the two periods – so no graphs, just numbers, the most impressive of which is that we had over a quarter of a million page views since the last report in March! Our top ten pages were:

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<th>The Morris Ring Front Page</th>
<th>Saddleworth Rushcart (4146 views!)</th>
<th>Traditional Morris Events</th>
<th>A Handbook of Morris Dances</th>
<th>Morris Dance Music</th>
<th>List of all future events</th>
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I haven’t listed the other 949 pages!

We’ve added another 300 Facebook followers who now total over 2000 despite me weeding back a fair number of dodgy likes and followers. Our posts reached over 8,000 people in January! Two thirds of our audience identify as male, the majority over 65 but more to do with Facebook’s demographic – and just in case you needed a graph -
It still seems the most appropriate social media for our type of content and ability to moderate!

The web news subscription service continues to add new users – we have about 150 subscribers. You can join to receive links to Morris Ring news items and important updates direct to your email in box using our MailChimp subscription form. I promise not to inundate you – usually about once a month. You may unsubscribe from the service at any time. Your details will not be shared with any third party and will be deleted should you unsubscribe.

**Overseas Bagman Report**

I will keep this report fairly short, based on the responses I have had from the Morris Ring’s overseas clubs. As any area rep will tell you, communication to and from the clubs they represent is the essence of their role. However, with the overseas clubs being spread over 3 continents, that’s a little harder

- Utrecht MM travelled over to the UK, with elements of Helmond MM, to attend the Saddleworth Rushcart in 2023, and it was great to catch up with Arnold and the rest on my home ground. As always when they come over, the hills are quite a shock to the system! They also hosted Leeds and Yateley in Utrecht last year and are hoping to make the return journey to Leeds in 2024. Clearly the West Riding air suits them. They are looking to do more with their sister side in Utrecht, Maids of the Mill, and joint practices may be organised.

- Helmond have been less active but are still organising their annual weekend of dance, which is well worth the trip. Please contact them directly for more information.

- Silkeborg MM have members spread throughout Denmark, so getting people together has proved challenging. They did however maintain their tradition of dancing out at Christmas time in Silkeborg, something the club has been doing since 1977. The members who live locally meet up a couple of times a month socially. Plans are afoot to visit the UK in 2024, I am told by Christian.

- Over in Canada, Vancouver MM are, like many sides in the UK, adjusting their dance outs to fit around lower numbers of active dancers, injuries etc. They are still however enjoying what they do.

- Perth MM celebrate their 50th year in 2024 and are set to perform at the Fairbridge Festival, the major West Australian folk event this year. Their numbers are steady and they performed at the National Ale in their home city in 2023. Dancing out with the other Perth sides is part of their annual programme, as is entertaining the occasional stray UK Morris dancer who visits on their travels.
If any sides in the UK are looking to travel over to meet up with our overseas sides, please let me know. Also if any sides are planning trips overseas generally, a short report to pass on tips, experiences or contacts which may help other sides plan something similar, are always welcome.

Cheers
Ed Worrall
Morris Ring Overseas Bagman
edworrall@gmail.com
Papers related to nominations for Full Membership of the Morris Ring

Letter of application from Golden Star Morris

To: Peter Austin, Bagman of the Morris Ring
From: Emma Shear-Elliott, Squire of Golden Star Morris

Dear Peter,

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

In our most recent AGM, Golden Star Morris agreed that we would like to upgrade our membership to the Ring from ‘Associate’ to ‘Full’.

I understand we need to be recommended by a side which is already a full member. I recently discussed this matter with the Squire of Belchamp Morris, who are good friends of Golden Star, and who have kindly volunteered to recommend us and will also send their letter soon.

We are also close friends with multiple overlaps of membership with two other Morris Ring sides local to us; Kemp’s Men, and Big Jigs, the latter of which joined as a full member last summer. It would be great to see the local morris sides further united together as part of the Morris Ring.

As a side that has been mixed since formation in 1979 (or 1980 depending on who you ask), we would consider it an honour to be admitted to the Morris Ring and are keen to become more active and involved in Ring events.

Two members from Golden Star, including myself, will be attending the ARM in March, and as a side we are excited to be part of the Morris Ring’s continued journey of both tradition and evolution.

Thank you for considering our application,

Yours faithfully,
Emma Shear-Elliott
Squire, Golden Star Morris

Letter of Nomination for Golden Star from Belchamp Morris

Dear Peter

I am writing to you to inform you that Belchamp Morris are in full support of Golden Star in their pursuit of full membership of the Morris Ring.

We have danced out together on many occasions including Folk East last year. We’ve always found them to be welcoming and friendly to us and other sides. They are very inclusive and great ambassadors for the morris.

Their dancing has always been of a high standard, energetic and accurate. They engage with their audience and obviously enjoy themselves.

Belchamp Morris therefore highly recommend Golden Star Morris as suitable candidates to become full members of the Ring. This would greatly benefit both them and the Ring.

Yours sincerely
Kieran Fitzgerald
Squire of Belchamp Morris
Flowers of Ilmington Morris

I would like to propose the Flowers of Ilmington Morris become full members of the Morris Ring. The side was formed in 2017 but previously some of the current side had danced under the tutorage of the Traditional Ilmington Morris Men to perform at an event in the village, after the event the side lapsed but there was enough enthusiasm to form a ladies side which meets weekly to practise the dances from the village. They have a strong membership and have performed at local Fetes and events in and around the local area.

Regards

Jim Chapman (foreman of the Traditional Ilmington Dancers)

Having received the above proposal from Jim, as West Midlands Area Rep, I would like to add my support to the Flowers of Ilmington Morris becoming full members of the Morris Ring. Over the last 7 years I have witnessed an enthusiastic side perform at local village events including their mummers’ plays and they have always welcomed myself and any other side interested in visiting Ilmington and sharing its dances.

Regards,

Matthew Turvey (West Midlands Area Rep)
Area Representatives (year of first election in brackets)

East Midlands, Charlie Corcoran (2019)
South Midlands, Roger Comley (2003)
Northern, Darren Nugent (2021)
Northwest, David Loughlin (2008)
Northeast, Brian Pollard (1994)
West Midlands, Matt Turvey (2021)
Eastern, Matt Simons (2022)
South West and Wales, Paul Reece (2017)
Southeast, Lewis Elliot (2023)

Area Representatives Reports

East Midlands, Charlie Corcoran

I will start with the apology I offer to the sides in the East Midlands area - I do not get about as much as I might like. I try to maintain email contact and these days with the internet, Facebook etc. I can get a fairly decent picture of what’s going on. So, unless there is an issue, or the Squire of the day has specific questions, I see no point in trying to replicate what is clearly on The Morris Ring website or in the Ring Bagman’s Newsletters. Fewer sides opt to attend Ring Meetings these days but there are more opportunities these days for all sides to interact with friends far and near. With days of dance, Ales and Feasts all can keep as busy as they can or want to be. A few years ago, I did try to collate a diary of morris events in the area, but it proved to be like building a house on shifting sands - thankless task. There are stacks of advice on the MR website, but I hope that if a side is planning an event and think that I might be of any assistance I hope that they would ask me without me constantly offering.

For this report I explained that I didn’t want as much information as they supplied for the on-line Morris Census 2023 but simply a brief resume of the state of play with each side, giving the examples: highlights of the past 12 months; the health of or changes to their membership; any additions or changes to their repertoire or annual programme and obviously any revolutionary ideas they might have had about attracting new members.

Aldbury Morris Men

Aldbury Morris Men is reasonably healthy with 16 dancers and 3 musicians. (We are all getting older however and haven’t had much luck recruiting new members!). Because we are still going strong, we have collected men who still want to dance after their own sides have given up.

We dance on New Year’s Day and at dawn on May Day in our home village, and then dance out at a different pub every Thursday from 1st May to 31st August. Being a musical lot, every dance out is followed by playing and singing.
We also dance at a few regular fetes etc, Day of Dance events, and also by request for Scouts, charities etc.

We dance mostly Cotswold Morris with a few other traditions thrown in. And we quite often dance out with other sides.

Tony, Bagman

Anker Morris Men
Ambling along, managed Wednesday evenings and a couple of days of dance. Not huge numbers but picked up a couple of ‘new’ members - new to Anker rather than new to dancing. Turn out not always huge due to older members suffering various injuries / cruises and younger ones working all the hours there are but only had to call off one evening (and it was caning it down so not a great loss). Did a couple of bookings for the coronation, didn’t get away anywhere this year.

Emma Melville

Anstey Morris Men
Our dancing seasons starts on St George’s day and goes on till the beginning of September. We had some excellent dance outs last year but some we had to cancel because we couldn’t make up side. This was mainly in the holiday period and our numbers these days are such we can’t cope with too many being away. Our big event of the year was our 40th anniversary which we celebrated with dancing, food and beer.

Our tradition remains Cotswold with no plans to attempt others and also, we have no plans to go mixed.

At a number of our dance outs, we make specific collections for the charity Prostaid which we send directly to them gift aided.

We remain extremely grateful to Everard’s for their continuing sponsorship.

Dick Lewis, Bagman

Bedford Morris Men No report received.

The Brackley Morris Men No report received.

Dolphin Morris
Dolphin Morris spent the 2022-23 practice season putting together a reduced selection of dances which our Foreman, Mike Wilkinson, chose to get us back on our post-pandemic feet and enjoying dancing again. This year we have introduced a few new (to us) dances and have spent much more time in polishing and tidying and reminding ourselves of some seemingly forgotten basics.

We had a good summer tour season with mostly good numbers and put on a pretty good show. We stuck to our tour list rule to include several favourite tours and a few new or revived one. It worked well.

At our AGM, we changed all the elected officers of the side - we'd worn out the old ones! The joint (demi-) squires, Nick Murphy and Dave Walters, stepped down and young (ish) Gavin Davison stepped up to the plate as the new Squire. Martin Morley stood down as bagman after nearly 10 years and Dave Walters took his place. Our Swagman, David Gough, had been unable to attend practices for a few years, and was happy to hand over the books to Ray Dawson. David was given an
honorary membership of the side having continued to look after our money whilst not being able to enjoy the benefits of dancing.

On the face of it, we have a good number of members, with 15 who quite regularly turn up for practice, and a few who travel further who attend when they can. However, we do quite often struggle to put up a set for an eight-man dance. Of those 15 'regulars', two are non-dancing musicians, at least three have struggled with health issues (mostly creaky knees and hips) and the rest don’t often all attend on the same night! We’ve also had a couple of members move away from the area. At the same time, we’ve received great support from Jon and Emma Melville who regularly travel some distance to be with us, and after 32 years’ close association with the side, and several years as a regular musician, Emma became a full dancing member in 2023.

Dave Walters, Bagman

First Class Stamp
Another good year did Chippenham and Newark as well as various evenings out. Have 5 new dancers this year which is rather good. Plus breeding the next generation - 2 babies and another 3 on the way! So, any tour plan now includes who is dancing and who is minding the crèche at any one time. Despite this, already down to do Chippenham again next year.

Emma Melville

Foresters Morris and Sword Dancing Club
After a good practice season 22/23, our Summer dancing season began with the sad passing of Vic Martin, our long-time Foreman, after a short illness.

We danced out at local pubs most weeks from May to July.

Our new recruit from 2022 returned to service after several months “paternity leave”, plus we have also recently managed to re-recruit a past member after a 15 year lay-off, so we have 11 members at present.

We have held a few joint practices with the Lincoln and Micklebarrow Morris Men, and we have danced out together a few times during the year.

Highlights of the past year include dancing at the Nottingham Beer Festival, Nottingham Castle Christmas Market and the Bottesford Duck Race on Boxing Day where we collected just over £250 for charity.

Steve Moore Bagman, Foresters Morris and Sword Dancing Club

Hinckley Bullockers
Just started practising for another year. Have picked up a couple of new members. Rolling along as per usual - not enough practise, too much mulled wine on the day for anyone to notice!

Emma Melville
Knightlow Morris Men
As ever, we happily caper along with the tides of fortune. We've welcomed a new member this year and have started exploring North Leigh as a tradition to dance. We've got out a few times when we can, sometimes supporting our friends at Anker. We hope to get out where we can this year, as ever do keep us in mind for events around Central and North Warwickshire.

Peter Austin

Leicester Morris
Leicester Morris men celebrated their 70th year in 2023. Events ranged from a very wet Straw Bear and a soggy Day of Dance to a glorious wedding of one of the dancers, only three years after the originally planned date. Other highlights included our first Feast since Covid, and a lovely May Day tour marred only by parking tickets at 7.00am in a place we’ve parked for free every year for decades. Wednesday evening tours have seen generally good turnout of dancers but unpredictable audience numbers. Overall, an excellent celebratory year, but in common with many sides there was anxiety about membership numbers. So, after several years of fudging the issue, an EGM looked at the question of becoming a mixed side. The vote was soundly in favour and although we lost a couple of members, we gained three experienced female dancers and one musician, plus a male raw recruit. As well as lowering the age profile, this new influx has served to revitalise the side and we go forward with enthusiasm and cautious optimism, henceforth known as Leicester Morris.

Pete Johnson, Squire

Lincoln & Micklebarrow Morris Men
We have lost another member; one of our longer standing members has lost enthusiasm for the Morris, confirming his non-active status. We also had another longstanding dancer off sick for all of the 2023 programme, though he has now returned to practice and is getting stronger. We have an ex-Trigg man occasionally coming to our practices and hope he will become established. The priority of our practices involves bringing our two relatively new members up to speed. Some practices are held jointly with Foresters with whom we continue to mix and match for dance outs. We are also grateful to the Simons brothers for their occasional support at practices and dance outs. Our establishment, i.e. without collaborators, is eight dancers and two musicians. We mostly rely on MP3s and smart speakers for music at practice as our main musician has mobility issues.

On plough Sunday 2023 we performed the Bassingham Plough Play in the local pubs in Navenby. For dance-outs we have formed mixed Foresters / Lincoln and Micklebarrow sides for most, but not all, gigs. This works well and allows both teams to have a full programme and to continue to attend events that we treasure. In 2023 we danced at Nottingham and Grantham beer festivals. We danced at the May Day Fair and Christmas Market, also in Grantham and enjoyed the wonderful weekend that is Thaxted in June. We had performed at a few village fetes during June, July and August and took part in Newark Traditions, Lincoln BIG Day of Morris as well as participating in Foresters pub dance-out programme, on one occasion vastly outnumbering the hosts.

Seismic events at the AGM in October as we decided to have a change at the top after having the same officers since inception. Glyn Vigurs is now Squire, taking over from Andy Horn. Pete Moore is now Bagman, taking over from Ian Thomson. Glyn has also taken over Foreman duties from Pete Moore. I am sure we were not nearly fulsome enough in our praise for the sterling service put in by Andy, Ian and Pete for over twenty years.
Our 2024 programme is very similar to the 2023. We are also eagerly looking forward to participating in the Newark JMO day of dance in April and being in York with Ebor in June to mark their fiftieth anniversary.

Glyn Vigurs (Squire/Foreman) & Pete Moore (Bagman)

**Northampton Morris Dancers**

Overall, we had an enjoyable year! Numbers of musicians and dancers are stable, so we are not in any danger, but we are hoping to increase the numbers over the next couple of years. We have already started to make our presence known by putting posters on notice boards and we intend to try to attend local events to make our present felt.

There has been one major change during the last year. We have changed our name from “Northampton Morris Men” to “Northampton Morris Dancers”. We have had ladies dancing with the side since 2019 and it was felt that the name gave a better representation of the side’s make-up and its aims.

In terms of dancing, we danced with Rose and Castle and other local sides on St. George’s Day and joined Brackley to Dance up the Sun on May Day. Days and weekends of dance are always important morris events, and we were able to attend Forest of Dean, Peterborough and Stony Stratford (twice), in all cases fielding a full side. On a more local note, we had several evenings dancing out with local sides including Rose and Castle, Royal Oak, Braybrooke and Stony Steppers. The evening at Queen Eleanor’s Cross at Geddington was particularly enjoyable and attracted a reasonable crowd of locals. We also danced by ourselves on a few occasions!

We do try to attend some local (or localish) events and this year we went to Grendon Daffodil Festival, Crick Scarecrow Festival and Wilby Festival. Two more unusual appearances were to give a talk and demonstration to the local British Legion. We concluded with “Bonny Green Garters” around the ground floor – much to the surprise of the local cribbage league! The other was a workshop at Sir Christopher Hatton School in Wellingborough as part of their International Day. We had a very enjoyable morning and the pupils, particularly the older girls, were quite enthusiastic. Spare a thought for the musician who had to play the same tune about 30 times.

Unfortunately, it is necessary to end on a sad note with the passing of two members. Dave Goode, a long-time member and ex squire and more lately the fool, died on 27th June. It is more poignant as he appeared with us less than a week before his death. Barry Newman, ex squire, bagman and fool, died on 20th October. He had not been an active dancer form some years but was well known to the older members.

Graham Rowley, Treasurer

**Moulton Morris Men** - No report received.

**Packington Morris Men** - believed to have disbanded

**Ripley Morris** - No report received.

**Rose & Castle Morris** - No report received.

**Towersey Horseshoes Morris** - No report received.

**Witchmen** - No report received.
Northern, Darren Nugent

**Barnsley Longsword** – no report

**Great Yorkshire Morris** - no report.

**Green Oak Morris Men (Doncaster)**

2023 has been a much better year for Green Oak and the change of bagman has brought new focus and ideas into the activities and we have been out dancing much more and in different places. Dancing at Kirk Sandall to celebrate the coronation of Charles III was a particular favourite.

The support of the side has been good to see – only on a few occasions have we been short of the 6 dancers and, even then, we’ve managed to put on a show. Flexibility is key to the way forward if we still can’t get new men. Despite 2 “Give it a go” evenings we haven’t had any recruits, which is disappointing. Is it better to keep the dancing going or stand on principle and decline to nothing?

We had nine dance outs this year compared with four last year, with a mix of weekend and Wednesday dance outs.

We have a pro-active approach to promoting our morris activity. Our 2023 promotions included:

- Thorne Moorends Community Radio (TMCR) interview and our dance out schedule advertised on their website
- “Give it a go night” - 24 May and 27 September
- Bawtry Arts Festival, 17 June (two dance out invitations received off the back of it)
- Hatfield Cubs, 13 September
- Sandall Park litter pick, 23 September
- Elmfield Park litter pick, 14 October
- 1715 beermats distributed
- 35 event listings across Facebook
- 21 press coverage pieces across print, websites, Facebook and Twitter (inc. Front page article in Doncaster Gazette).

Green Oak practice on Wednesdays 20:00 to 21:30 at Doncaster Brewery Tap, Young Street, Doncaster, DN1 3EL

**Grimsby Morris** - no report

**Handsworth Traditional Sword Dancers**

Handsworth Sword Dancers have had an extremely successful year. The side performed at Sidmouth Folk Festival for the first time in over 20 years, where we were extremely well received. As a result of our attendance, we have received invites to several of the top festivals for summer 2024 and will be attending Warwick and Shrewsbury.

We hosted the SDU Longsword Competition in Sheffield, which saw more teams than for a number of teams compete and showcase their longsword dancing, including many morris sides. We hope we have ignited a new interest in longsword, which is somewhat in need of reinvigoration. We are planning to compete at the 2024 SDU to regain the titles we won in 2022(!), having not competed at our own event.
The side has around 25 members, of whom around 17 are still dancing to some extent (a particular highlight of the SDU was having two sets up for our seven-person dance 'Richmond'). We also have four dedicated musicians, one of whom joined last January.

Recruitment for dancers has unfortunately been lacking over the last 12 months and, despite being generally healthy, we could really do with one or two more dancers to add resilience to the traditional (eight-person) dance in particular.

We practice on a Wednesday night, 8-10pm at the Burton Street Foundation, Hillsborough, Sheffield m S6 2HH. We welcome anyone interested in having a go at our form of longsword, which is fast, energetic, and dynamic.

Website: [http://www.handsworthsworddancers.org.uk/](http://www.handsworthsworddancers.org.uk/)
We are also on Facebook and Instagram.

**Harthill Morris**
Harthill Morris have 26 active members – 9 musicians, 15 dancers, an animal and an occasional fool. Some of the musicians also have a dance or two up their sleeves for resilience. So, we are in a healthy position.

We mainly dance Cotswold.

The morris band includes violin, accordion, melodion, concertina, beer stick.
We practice on Thursday nights, September – April, in Harthill Village Hall, Whinney Hill, Harthill, Sheffield. Details can be found at harthillmorris.org.uk or the Harthill Morris Facebook page.
Recently performed at the Kelham Island Victorian Christmas Market and our annual Boxing Day celebrations. We are finalising our 2024 schedule but already have booked ten Thursday evenings at different public houses throughout the Summer, as well as the Buxton Day of Dance, and most likely the Lincoln Big Morris.

Cheers.
Lesley Ellam, Harthill Morris Bagman. harthill.bagman@gmail.com

**Lord Conyers Morris Men**
We are a male dancing side with mixed musicians. We have 18 members. We have two fiddles, a whistle and the occasional drum and bass drum.

Lord Conyers Morris Men are mainly a Cotswold side but also perform our own Longsword. We practice on Wednesday evenings at The Duke of Leeds, 16 Church Street, Wales Sheffield, S26 5LQ.

Last Summer we performed at the Evesham Morris weekend and in early August 2023 we attended our annual pilgrimage up to Robin Hoods Bay. Blessed with fine weather, it was an extremely enjoyable weekend. And in September we danced as part of the Bromley Folk Festival.

A notable success was winning the “sword dancing as a second language” category at the SDU competition hosted by Handsworth Sword Dancers in Sheffield in October.

We also performed our traditional Christmas Wassail & Abbotts Bromley Horn Dance on Saturday 23rd December.

For 2024 we will perform the horn dance again on May Eve and then dancing at dawn on May Morning, and we will return again to Evesham, Robin Hoods Bay, and Bromyard.
Email address: lordconyers@gmail.com
Website: www.lordconyers@org.uk

Regards,
Peter Yendley, Secretary, Lord Conyers Morris Men

**Spen Valley Longsword**

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.

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

Further details via our website: spenvalleylongsword.org.uk

Cheers,
Dave Webster

**Wath Morris**

Wath Morris are a mixed side with 14 dancers, 5 musicians (inc. 1 that does both), plus the very youthful Morris Minors.

Our dance styles are: Bledington in Summer, border in winter (and occasionally in the summer), longsword all year-round, and also mumming in the winter.
Our musicians include a melodeon, concertina, fiddle, flute, and drum.

We practice on a Tuesday night, 8pm-10pm, at the Rugby Club, Moor Road, Wath.

Website: www.wath-morris.co.uk
Wath Morris Facebook group: [https://www.facebook.com/groups/41239503880](https://www.facebook.com/groups/41239503880)

Plans for 2024:

- 06/01  Wassailing Billingley & Feast in evening
- 03/02  Lupercalia day of dance, Billingley
- 08/03 – 10/03  Whitby family weekend
- 03/05 – 05/05 Wath Festival
- 15/06  Ebor Day of Dance
- 29/06  Pretty Villages tour
- 06/09 – 08/09 Bainbridge family weekend

Most Tuesday evenings dance-out May – July inclusive

Next Winter: (dates TBC)
- Mumming tours of Wath and Barnsley
- Dodworth Fire Festival
- Wath Fire Festival
- Boxing Day Annual Tour, Wentworth, Wath and perhaps another.
This past year has been characterised by a much stronger side with increased numbers able to perform a full range of dances. Additionally, a new sword dance has been added to the repertoire, Arkengarthdale Sword Dance, a distinctive 5-person dance from the upper dales, partially recorded by Maud Karpeles and Cecil Sharp and reconstructed by the team.

The team has had an extensive programme of events including:
Mostly Border Dances:
- Lupercalia and feast in Billingley
- Whitby Family Weekend
- Dodworth Fire Festival
- Wath Fire Festival
- Boxing Day Tour to Wentworth and Wath
Mostly Bledington:
- Wath Festival
- Thaxted Ring Meeting
- Pretty Villages Tour around the “Rotherham Cotswolds”
- Bainbridge Family Weekend
- 9 x Tuesday evening or weekend dance-outs
Sword:
- Competing at the Sword Dance Union Annual Meeting in Sheffield
Mumming:
- Wath Tour
- Barnsley Tour
Fund-raising Ceilidh – with “Common Ground”

Additionally, we have had a weekend of instructional in Bledington dances and a full day sword instructional.

The highlight of the year for many was the visit to Thaxted Ring Meeting, the first ring meeting several of the side had attended and notable because of the inclusion of two women in the team, Angela and Catherine, who both danced in the main display dance. The team were also proud to carry the Thaxted horns into church for the Sunday service. The meeting was a first in that three partners came as “observers” - Joan, Sue and Carol.

Another first was our attendance at the Sword Dance Union annual competition which was hosted by Handsworth Sword Team in Sheffield. Dancing in the “Morris as a second language” category, we came third (out of three) but learned a lot through the competition about what we need to do in order to be regarded as a better (or best) sword team.

As always, the weekends away were a great success with us being particularly blessed with great weather for the Bainbridge weekend as well as turning out a large and strong team. The Pretty Villages Tour was notable for being undertaken on what seemed like the hottest day in history! Luckily, we were supported by the Wath Morris minors allowing breaks in the sets of dances.

Tim Binns, Wath Morris Bagman
Wakefield Morris
We currently have 18 dancers and 7 musicians in our side, with just one member who is both dancer and musician. We generally hold recruitment sessions in September and although we have not been able to recruit any new dancers recently, we have been lucky enough to enlist two new musicians, one a melodeon player, the other a saxophonist who gives quite a boost to the band which comprises of melodeons, trombone, and drum.
We are a mixed North-West team and practice on Monday evenings from 7.30 – 9.00 pm in the Kings Way Methodist Church Hall in Ossett, Wakefield.
Website wakefieldmorris.com
Facebook Wakefield Morris
Email wakefieldmorris@googlemail.com

Our programme for 2024 is beginning to fill up, starting with the Rhubarb Festival in Wakefield in February, various local events throughout the dancing season, and continuing with our annual Ossett Beer Cart Festival at the end of May/beginning of June. We are very much looking forward to dancing at the Sidmouth Folk Festival this year from 3rd – 5th August.

Hazel Parker

White Rose Morris
White Rose Morris Men have recruited one new member this past year bringing our membership total to 19: that’s 18 dancers and 1 musician (4 of the dancers also double up as musicians).
We perform Cotswold dances to music performed on the melodeon and English concertina. We are based in Huddersfield and practice on Wednesday evenings, September through to April.
Website address: www.whiterosemorrismen.org.uk
Facebook: White Rose Morris (plus a another one “Where is Stanley” following one of our musicians).
Instagram: Whiterosemorris

Plans for 2024: Business as usual after last year’s very busy 70th anniversary celebrations.

Dan

Northwest, David Loughlin
Once again, my thanks to all for the support given by Squires and Bagmen over the last year it is greatly appreciated. For all who attended the North West JMO Day of Dance in Chester, Tony Foard and myself wish to thank you for coming to make the day a success and we hope you all enjoyed the day. My special thanks also go to Tony who has put in a lot of hard work and man hours to ensure that the day went as planned. I also need to mention although they will probably not see this report, my sincere thanks to those how acted as Event Marshals on the day, family members of dancers or musicians’ of the sides from the three Organisations who did a lot to make the day work smoothly. For those who are not aware a special welcome to a new side, Saddleworth Women’s Morris and Clog who have only just formed and are already Associated Members of the Morris Ring.
**Bury Pace Eggers**
Bury Pace-Eggers had a successful 2023. They have recruited 6 new members in the past year and went out for a short pre-Easter Tour. They also performed at Prestwich Clough Day, where they seem to be a regular feature.

**North British Sword Dancers**
This year has been busy in one respect as they have met fewer times but have however been abroad twice. They do face two problems around recruitment. They have plenty of dancers at practice, almost more than they can manage, but then have trouble getting enough of them to commit to bookings. The music problem is that their regular musicians have all suffered from ill-health, but potential new musicians tend to want to cherry-pick the 'good' bookings without committing to lower-key events.

Their year started with a practice weekend in Wigan, which was great. They had their regular Easter trip to Belgium and this time based themselves in Ostend and had a day in De Panne, where they met Dunkirk-based sword dancers in De Kring.

Spring/Summer was quiet, so they arranged a weekend for themselves which included a day's dancing in Huddersfield, which worked very well.

Their big event of the year was being invited to dance at the Balingen Garden Festival, in South-West Germany. Which started with a couple of nights in Tübingen, enabling them to have a warm-up dance tour and to improvise substitute swords with materials from a local garden centre, as Lufthansa had mislaid North British Swords. Then went on to the folk arts centre in Frommern, near Balingen, where they were very well looked after, and where their swords caught up with them. They finished their year with a November practice weekend, held in Hereford, another good place to dance.

**Kinnerton Morris Men**
Their numbers remain stable at 14 (11 dancers and 3 dedicated musicians) having lost one dancer who moved down south and gained another established dancer who moved up north. Their new recruit has lowered the average age slightly, keeping it just below 70.

Recruitment is still difficult as they had two open evenings immediately following appearances at Northgate Folk Festival and a local beer fest where people were enthusiastic and expressed an interest in coming. Sadly, no-one turned up apart from a young lad in his late twenties who lived nearby and wondered what the noise was. He immediately showed the potential to be a good dancer, but they haven’t seen him since.

They continue to meet up with local sides – Adlington Morris Men, Mersey Morris, Thelwall Morris and Chester City Morris Men – at least once during the year, and have made appearances at the Cheshire Show, National Waterways Museum, Northgate Folk Festival and Eccleston Beer Festival. They had three enjoyable days of dance - St George’s Day with Chester City Morris Men, Thelwall’s 50th Anniversary Day of Dance and an excellent day out in Llandudno which will definitely be repeated.
In all, the year offered some good and varied events and, although dancing days were down on 2022 due to availability of members.

**Royal Preston Morris Dancers**
They have completed 12 Bookings during the Summer with a mixture of Annual Repeat Events, for example The Higham Scarecrow Festival in Lancashire, The Longest Day Evening Dance-Out and Astley Hall in Chorley. We also continued our Annual Performances such as Ribble Valley Tour and our Lytham Tour towards the end of the Season. Other new Dance-Outs included our initial Clog-Fest held at Downham Hall near Clitheroe, with guests wearing the obvious attire-Clogs!

They did acquire a new Member, Kilian, who joined just after the Practice Season was finishing so he is fast-tracked for his initial appearance in the new season. They currently have 14 Dancers and 8 Musicians; the Band includes two couples from Malkin Morris Ladies North West Team although inevitably not all their Members attend every Booking.

They are currently putting together their 2024 Programme, again a mixture of Annual Bookings and ones that are new to them, such as supporting the local Ceilidh Club, performing at the Preston Folk Dance Club’s 100th Anniversary and a Charity Duck Race Event in the village of Waddington near Clitheroe. They are scheduled to return to the Higham Scarecrow Festival in August, and the Longest Day Evening dance-out, which traditionally takes place in Croston. They are hoping to meet-up with Ripon City Morris Dancers.

**Chester City Morris Men**
The overall numbers for Chester City Morris Men continue to be stable but fitness and availability for performances are becoming increasingly difficult. During the 2023 season the team was able to dance out four times taking in the usual St George’s Day Celebrations, the North West JMO Day of Dance in the fine City of Chester and Chester Folk Festival plus a couple of enjoyable days of dance in Chester. The outlook for the team is worrying unless it manages to attract new members. There are no plans at present to open the team to female members.

**Chapel-en-le-Frith Morris**
A year of increasing numbers but sadly, a founder member hanging up his bells. Started with 7 men, 6 women, 2 boys (10 and 15). This was renewed vigour, their new cohort of beginners had learnt 6 dancers, with had an extra melodeon player and a dancer aged 10.

The Easter Tour first dance out of season felt like a real celebration - a rebirth? Their youngest female danced solo jig out for the first time. In May danced up the Sun on May Day morning, possibly with more dancers than audience for once! In June they had some lovely dance-outs including a rather special private wedding in Hartington. Buxton Day of Dance, always one of their highlights with fifteen visiting sides and some very wet visitors but everyone enjoyed themselves. Later on, into August and September more enjoyable Morris Mondays despite the rain and a wind and another wonderful wedding on the moors.

At the end of September was a very upbeat AGM with their first female Squire was elected. In October they had two ‘Give Morris a Go’ evenings which resulted in 2 more enthusiastic female members. Then in November 2 more dancers arrived, one was an experienced female dancer and her male partner. Their last final practice night before Christmas was ‘Request Night’. 15 dances including 2 sets dancing Lichfield at the same time plus 10-year-old playing accordion for Flowing Bowl. The membership by end of year: 9 women, 8 men, 2 boys.
**Thelwall Morris**
This was their 50th Anniversary year which began well with both new additional members who joined last year. Unfortunately, their Fool retired from the team with no obvious replacement in the wings. They still managed a programme of dancing out at local pubs – more of a practice in kit, really. They did arrange a Day of Dance based in Warrington Town Centre and were joined by other local teams – Bollin, Earl of Stamford and Kinnerton Morris Men - and grand day was had by all.

Thelwall Village celebrated 1100 years with events throughout the summer in which they had display boards celebrating their 50 years and gave a dance displays in the hope of recruiting new members. This events were very well attended, and which recruited one very promising new member who unfortunately three months later, moved out of the area.

The team has also given two demonstration-lectures locally in the hope of recruitment. The audience thought it is great that they are keeping the tradition alive, but nobody wished to do it.

Injuries, age and health issues has meant the team still do not feel strong enough to accept paid bookings feeling that they are “good value for money”. They do however though commitment to their local catchment area with donation to Thelwall Rose Queen and Croft Carnival where the fee is unchanged since 2010 both these events are happy with our processing and a bit of dancing.

At the AGM in October, they voted to be an all-gender team, in the hope that more members would join – they had one new (male) member, but work commitments make practicing difficult for him. Thelwall Morris are still awaiting a non-male recruit.

**Mersey Morris**
The side continued to modernise its governance with an updated Constitution and Memorandum of Membership. The name was changed from Mersey Morris Men to Mersey Morris to reflect the membership of the side. There are 37 full members in the side of which there are 14 musicians and 23 dancers. 6 dancers are female. The move to accept female dancers was not because of an issue with recruitment, but with women asking to become dancers and Mersey Morris being an inclusive side embraced their enthusiasm. 7 new members joined in 2023 of 5 were women.

The side participated in 25 events as well 17 Monday night dance-outs in local pubs showing yet gain the high level of activity the side is involved with and motivation amongst our members, old and new.

The year started with our traditional dance-out on New Year’s Day at The Plasterer’s Arms in Hoylake and our Boxing Day Revels in Willaston. We continued to take part in the following events: Jockey Morris Plough Tour in Birmingham, Border & Molly Winter tour in Chester, Mayday Sun Upping on Bidston Hill, May Bank Holiday Seaside Tour in Parkgate, Forest of Dean weekend and the Ringheye Christmas event at Mobberley.

We also participated with other sides: Chester City Morris in Chester on St Georges Day, the JMO Northwest event in Chester, the Forest of Dean weekend and pub dance-outs with Kinnerton Morris and Mockbeggar Morris.

The big event of year was celebrating 70th Birthday of Wirral Morris with tour of the area taking in the Wirral’s oldest tree, oldest grave, oldest church and free-standing building, oldest manor house, oldest pub, and a picnic in the world’s first municipal park.
All in all, it has been a very successful year.
Mossley Morris Men
2023 was a business-as-usual year for Mossley Morris Men with starting the season by performing the pace egg play around the pubs of Mossley on Easter Monday and putting in a good showing at Saddleworth Rushcart (during which two of our dancers had to change attire multiple times as they were also dancing for Barnsley Longsword!) and finishing of the year dancing at a Christmas lights switch on in Mossley. They also danced at a local museum that had a small exhibition about morris dancing, danced at a couple of local fundraising events and practiced in kit around the pubs in Mossley.

Numbers wise, they have a core of around 10 dancers, along with a couple of others who step in from time to time, though they tend to dance 6-man dances. Unfortunately, they had a couple of their older members hung up their clogs last year, including John Heywood, at 84, their oldest member who used to also dance for Wrigley Head Morris Men.

They acquired a one new dancer this year as well as an extra couple of musicians and so are often healthily accompanied on the musical side.

Southport Swords
Their numbers remain the same though illness is taking its toll especially with our musicians. They are spending the winter working on a new dance to add to the Southport repertoire

Southport Swords did however venture into Yorkshire to reclaim the dance trophy at the SDU Longsword tournament. Also attended the Saddleworth Rushcart for the first time in a couple of decades and Leeds Dales tour.

Saddleworth Morris Men
Saddleworth Morris Men has had a good year of dancing in 2023 with their usual own Easter tour and the annual Rushcart Weekend. There was also the JMO Chester Day of Dance and a trip to Portsmouth & Victory Morris Day of Dance plus a few evenings out.

A couple of new members danced for their waistcoat in 2023, and the lads have settled nicely. They also have another new member dance for his waistcoat at Easter in 2024.

2024 also sees the Saddleworth Morris Men turn 50 years old as a side and they will be starting to celebrate on their annual Easter tour and are extending their celebrations during the year with extra tours including a long-awaited return to Thaxted Weekend.

Please note it is not the 50th Rushcart!!!

They hope to see friends old and new out and about during 2024 and wish everyone all the best for the coming season.

Leyland Morris Dancers
The optimism that they had over the previous year has continued through 2023 and the five new dancers that they obtained have remained with them. This has enabled them to dance out ten times during 2023 which would not have been possible without them. Three of them are ladies so they have renamed themselves and now are called Leyland Morris Dancers. They have not however been able to dance out any North West Morris so they hope this will materialise this year. They have 5 musicians and 11 dancers and are hoping for one or two new members this year.
Saddleworth Women’s Morris and Clog
Saddleworth Women’s Morris and Clog are a new side, with practices based in Denshaw, Saddleworth. They had a successful open evening in December and have started practices full time in January 2024. The side is a women's dance side, with a mixed band. They looking to perform a repertoire of collected Northwest dances, with an emphasis on those from the local area. They also have a number of members who danced step clog within the side and so step clog will be part of the side's performances.

One of the founders of the side is Lucy Marstin formerly from Wakefield Morris, who is acting as Squire and Forewoman with Ed Worrall is the side's Bagman and also playing in the band. They have a lot of practising to do especially as their membership being a mix of people new to morris and some with prior experience. However, they hope to be out dancing in the Spring/Summer and meeting up with our neighbouring sides.

Northeast, Brian Pollard
Benfieldside Morris and Sword
Regular Wednesday practices continued successfully through the winter leading to summer pub tours, which were always well received, though not always by large crowds! Luckily, we had some new recruits join us in September including a 10-year-old and two 11 – 12-year-olds together with their mothers. Hopefully, they will be dancing out this coming summer.

April saw us at the Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering and at the Richmond Mayfest (it rained nearly all day!). Later in May we graced Sedgefield Fair, a regular event for us. Again, some of us joined Durham Rams on the Leeds Morris Dales Tour.

In June some of us helped Great Yorkshire Morris out at Thaxted – the first time for many years – we had forgotten what a great weekend it is!

July saw us entertaining local W.I. groups, always well received and in early September we had our inaugural Coast Tour from South Shields to Sunderland ending up dancing for hordes of Sunderland FC supporters – fortunately, the team had just won, and the atmosphere was friendly!

In October we joined other teams at the JMO Day of Dance in Newcastle and then spent another superb weekend with Whitchurch Morris around Aylesbury.

December brought the run up to Christmas and we danced at a choir show at the South Causey Inn and a nearby pub collecting over £200 in support of the Tree Tops children’s ward at North Durham University Hospital.

The new year began as usual with Plough Sunday. The weather proved kind and we danced on Palace Green in Durham in front of the cathedral joined by Black Diamond Morris from Darlington and one or two from Hexham Morris. The plough was processed into the cathedral to be blessed by the dean and Durham Rams dancing the rapper. Largesse was offered by the dean and accepted by our youngest member, Axel, on behalf of the side. The plough then found its way to the marketplace where there was more dancing to a fairly good crowd.

Brian Pollard, Bagman
Claro Longsword
Claro still practises regularly and perform when we can guarantee a strong team.
A summary:
Claro continue to bring their interpretation of the Yorkshire tradition to discerning audiences. The team attended a glorious Thaxted weekend last June where we enticed a member of Great Yorkshire Morris to join us. We danced on some summer evenings in Harrogate and Knaresborough, including a cabaret spot at a country house hotel to a captive audience. Our plans to dance in Sheffield in October at the Handsworth-hosted Sword Dance Union meeting were unfortunately thwarted by illness. Plough Sunday at St. John’s Church in Knaresborough on the 7th of January 2024 – a 40-year involvement – was a great success when our contribution included readings, an address on the longsword tradition, performance of two dances and the engagement of some members of the congregation to form a sword lock. Our ancient plough was wheeled up the hill to Knaresborough’s Market Place where we danced again and we then gathered for our traditional, and very convivial, Plough Lunch at our musician’s home. We are due to perform at ST. Andrew’s Church in Aldborough for their Plough Sunday service on 28th January.
Barry Slaymaker, Bagman

Redcar Sword
Very little to report from Redcar Sword (again) this year – apart from that we are still here! Due to various injuries and illnesses our first outing in 2023 was not until Saltburn Folk Festival in August when we managed four brief spots which included the first public display of our new five-man dance – conjured up over the previous twelve months as a matter of necessity. Our only other public outing was at Greatham, near Hartlepool, our 57th Boxing Day performance of the Greatham Sword dance and Play attended, as usual, by a very appreciative crowd which included at least two four generation families. We already have a number of invitations to dance in 2024, which we hope to be able to fulfil.
Brian Pearce, Captain of Sword.

Monkseaton Morris
We have had quite a busy year.
We started on New Year’s Day with our traditional show in Monkseaton raising an unbelievable £2,600 for our chosen charity.
In March we had three weeks training the army’s Officer Training Corps (OTC) in a local dance that they could take to a competition in Scotland and compete against other OTCs from all over the country – they came second!
In May, June and July we mainly danced out locally on our practice nights, sometimes with other local teams (Hexham and Black Gate).
In August we went to Saddleworth Rushcart weekend.
In October we danced at the JMO (Joint Morris Organisations) day of dance in and around Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
In November we did a couple of local rapper tours collecting money for charity.
In December we danced at Beamish Museum Christmas Market.
That’s it for the year. A couple of new members danced out for the first time at these events. Roll on 2024!
Paul Nicholson, Bagman.
**Richmond on Swale Morris**
Richmond on Swale Morris have had a typical dance year. The highlights were:
1. Our own day of dance with invited sides in Richmond as part of the town’s Mayfest.
2. Dancing at Barnard Castle with other sides at the invitation of Black Sheep.
4. Our carol evening and mummers’ performance in a pub just before Christmas.
5. Boxing Day dance out at a village and in Richmond.
6. Our regular season of evening pub tours throughout the summer.

Our membership has remained constant, and practices have been well attended. We have been concentrating on improving our performances of Fieldtown, Bampton and Bledington traditions. We also practise some Ilmington, Ducklington, Adderbury, Headington, Lichfield and Upton on Severn for variety.

Andrew Bishop, Bagman

**Durham Rams Morris and Sword**
The side continues to practise morris with Benfieldside Morris so that the two sides can dance out together with the same repertoire and dancing style.
A joint side practises the rapper dance. This is mainly the Durham Rams dance based on the revival Hamsteels dance of the 1920’s.
This year we danced again at Durham Plough Sunday in January with Benfieldside and also had a tour of the Northeast coast in September. We also danced at events in Sedgefield, Wharfedale and Whitchurch, plus our fortnightly dance-outs on Wednesday evenings throughout the summer. We had a Boxing Day rapper tour of Durham pubs which has now become a tradition.

Chris Wagstaff, Squire

**West Midlands, Matt Turvey**
2023-2024 has been another busy year for many sides and I’ve managed to get out there and see many of the sides in my area throughout the course of the year. Particular highlights have included the Vale of Evesham National Morris Weekend, Sidmouth Folk Week and more recently the Original Welsh Border Morris Men’s dance out, all seeing a good showing of West Midland sides. I’ve also managed to attend a number of club practices and weeknight dance outs, every time it has been a pleasure to share the time with you and in terms of ales/feasts I had a fabulous time with Stafford & Anker and look forward to Leicester Morris’ Feast in a week’s time.

As always, please keep me posted on events you are holding in the coming year, and I’ll do my best to attend them — and encourage others to as well! Speaking of which, if you would like to attend Shakespeare Morris’ Stratford-upon-Avon Day of Dance on the 10th of August or more urgently the Vale of Evesham National Morris Weekend on the 21-23rd June — please get in touch as both fall under the remit of yours truly!

Enjoy the year all!

**1st Sedgley Morris**
2023 was a difficult year for 1st Sedgley Morris Men with dwindling numbers of dancers. We celebrated the Coronation at a village event in Bilbrook, danced at regular venues - Bilston, the Oak
House at West Bromwich, Chelmarsh Fete and Kinver Fayre. We danced out regularly with Bedcote Morris and had some very successful social gatherings generously hosted by members of the side.

However, by August the writing was on the wall, and we held an EGM to consider the future. We agreed that the situation was deteriorating and unless we were able to recruit more men, we would be unable to carry on into 2024. The irony is that for the first time in the side’s 40+ years history we are blessed we have very talented musicians!

We therefore decided to have a last go at getting more members and set up a 6-week course for dancers in October/November and revisit the situation in February. We plastered the Black Country and beyond with leaflets and posters and used social media - we finished up with 6 people completing the course. As it was open to all we had 4 women and 2 men.

Consequently, we called the AGM forward by a month and on 4th January voted, very narrowly, to become a mixed side. We knew that some members would bow out and so we have a few less men and, as of now, 5 new women.

We are entering a new phase to train the new members to a standard where we can dance out later in the year. We need to elect a new Squire as Ian Davies will stand down and we have an adjourned AGM on 22nd February. Practices are seeing turn outs in double figures - last week there were 20 of us! This time last year practices were regularly cancelled when less than 4 dancers were intending to come.

So, we look forward to the future in our new format and as 1st Sedgley Morris - 1st Sedgley Morris Men bowed out at the Plough tour with Jockey Morris on 6th January.

David Jeffery, Bagman

Coventry Morris Men

CMM’s year has been very much getting back to the pre-COVID position with events that we organise back there and events coming in from outside recovering, things like dancing at Care Homes and workshops for various uniformed organisations. At one of these, one of our men noticed a work colleague who has subsequently joined us with his wife commenting that “he’s always enjoyed dancing!” We have become involved with a number of Eastern European mainly dance groups (reflecting Coventry’s multi-cultural demographic) who have been impressed with our English dances. The extra man will help us to continue for another year.

Martin Trewinnard, Bagman
Faithful City Morris Men (FCMM)
Our Squire started his second tenure with the first three outings being Beer Festivals! Unfortunately, despite best efforts, all our possible recruitment leads from the last year did not materialise. The “quest” for new members continues.

We did a dementia café display (nobody got left behind), our usual Boxing Day at The Talbot at Knightwick, a plough blessing also at The Talbot (after a few quick practices of Speed the Plough, Bampton) and again danced at the Three King Hanley Castle for St. George’s Day. On May Day we danced at Worcestershire Beacon before going to Upton-upon-Severn Folk Festival. We did one paid booking (Sinton Green); a performance at a school; a day of dance with England’s Glory in Gloucester and finished with our performance on Sunday of Bromyard Folk Festival. In addition, we did fourteen Wednesday night dance outs (the summer weather was superb).

We managed to do most of the dances on the Squire’s List (46 dances), however two need further brushing up (i.e. Abnall’s (Lichfield) & Queen’s Delight (Bucknell)). Fanny Frail (Evesham) which is always a crowd pleaser finale, being the most frequently performed (25 times). A few other dances broke double figures, Old Tom of Oxford (Bampton) (13 times), Ring ’o Bells (Lichfield) and Upton Volunteers (Upton Style) (11 times each), Molly in the Woods (Knightwick) and The Jubilee Dance (Ilmington) (10 times each).

In total we did 235 dances during the 2023 season. Unfortunately, because of absence, injury and relocation moves there were no rapper performances this year.

A very significant challenge for us (as a viable morris side) in the near future is a likely change of landlord/ownership of our long standing and very supportive practice venue at The Talbot at Knightwick.

Robin Aitken, Bagman

Flowers of Ilmington Morris
Flowers of Ilmington have had a busy year in and around the village, highlights include:
• Dancing the sundown on the eve of May Day at Warwickshire’s highest point
• King’s Coronation street party
• NGS Garden’s Day
• Shakespeare Hospice Fete
• Evesham Morris Weekend at the Red Lion and the Howard Arms, Ilmington
• Wimpstone Fete
• Ebrington Fete
• Red Lion Anniversary in Evesham
• Ilmington Show
• Ilmington Mummers at the Red Lion and Howard Arms, Ilmington
• 12th Night Wassail at Ilmington Manor

We became a mixed Side in 2022 in an effort to increase numbers. Currently we have 23 members which include two who have just joined.

Nigel Dunn
Bagman
**Jockey Morris**

We wasted no time in kicking off the dancing for 2023 as we joined Alvechurch Morris Men for their New Year’s Day event. Always sets us up for the year!

In May we decided to hold a Day of Dance in Birmingham, in the hope that the weather would be better than in January and October… This proved to be very successful, and we had great fun in the sun with our fellow Birmingham sides and our good mates Saddleworth Morris Men.

Jockey had quite a few dance outs, feasts and days of dance, as ever, meeting up with lots of our friends around the country, which is always a great pleasure. Events we returned to after some years were the National Morris Weekend in Evesham and also Bonheidans in Belgium, which we revisited after a mere 35-year absence!

Other regular events Jockey turned up to were Peterborough’s Day of Dance, Bromyard Folk Festival (where we had our best turnout for many years), Saddleworth and, of course, at our own Plough Tour and post AGM tour.

In common with many sides our numbers could always be better (our practice night being Friday does sometimes take people away when they have a weekend commitment) but we have gained another new dancer and as I write two more are due to join us. We are entering our 75th Anniversary year with optimism.

Gary Chilvers
Bagman

**Shakespeare Morris**

Shakespeare Morris has had a great year, we’ve attended (in chronological order) the following since the last ARM amongst our regular Monday night and other club’s weeknight dance outs:

- Shakespeare’s Birthday Celebrations – Stratford-upon-Avon
- St. George’s Day – Fleece Inn, Bretforton
- May Day – Stratford-upon-Avon
- Coronation Celebrations – Broadway, Broom & Lower Quinton
- Mick Dunn (Founder Member’s) 80th Birthday Day of Dance – Bidford-on-Avon, Ilmington, Snowshill & Lower Quinton
- Trinity Monday Celebrations – Bidford-on-Avon
- Vale of Evesham National Morris Weekend
- Friday Night dance out in Warwick during Warwick Folk Festival with Jockey Morris & Hammersmith
- Red Lion, Evesham’s 1 Year Anniversary Evening of Dance
- Bromyard Folk Festival
- Apple Day Plays at the Fleece Inn, Bretforton & Wold’s End Orchard, Chipping Campden
- Mumming in 16 pubs throughout November & December
- New Year’s Day – Boar’s Head, Hampton Lucy

We have just changed our practice venue to Bridgetown Primary School, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 7JP and welcome anyone interested in keeping the morris on the streets & stage!

In 2024 we will be attending many of the events listed above in addition we’ll be celebrating our 65th Anniversary by hosting a Day of Dance in Stratford-upon-Avon on the 10th of August, ending the day with a feast. If you are interested in coming, please email shakespearemorris@gmail.com
and look out for updates on the Morris Ring website to find the latest plans for the day – hope to see you there!

Finally, I will be emailing out to all sides local to us, details of our Monday night pub dance outs throughout the Summer – if you don’t get an email and are a side local to Stratford-upon-Avon, please let us know, we’d love you to join us!

Matthew Turvey

**Stafford Morris**

Stafford have fared pretty well over the past 12 months, with about 8 new dancers. The daughter of one of our dancers now dances out with us, she’s 11, so great to see someone so young taking an interest. We have also got a great new 18-year-old dancer, again wonderful to see. Although we have a good number of dancers, we do struggle with music as we only have one musician at Stafford. We are lucky in that musicians from Uttoxeter help us out, but not an ideal situation and we would like to recruit another musician.

We had 37 bookings during 2023, all in collaboration with Uttoxeter Heart of Oak Morris. We made the decision to combine our calendar with Uttoxeter and always have joint bookings.

Stafford’s annual Feast is always a memorable occasion, with Sides joining us from quite far away.

2023 saw quite a monumental moment in Stafford’s history, as after a vote we moved from white trousers to black trousers. The 2024 Feast was the retirement of white trousers and kit is now black trousers. This was a difficult decision for some of our team members, but all have embraced it, and the Side looks great when dancing out.

Andy Chell

Bagman

**The Original Welsh Border Morris Men**

50 years since formation – December 2023

In 1973, 50 years ago, Silurian and Faithful City Morris sides, both Cotswold at the time, decided to revive the traditional Welsh Border dances of the border counties. Some things you can set your watch by and some things you can set your calendar by! If it’s the first Saturday in December then it’s The Original Welsh Border Morris Men’s practice day at the Bell Inn, St Johns, Worcester. This year it was our 50th year and so, following the practice of the border dances led by foremen, Richard Sinclair and Richard Hannah, we enjoyed our traditional sausages and chips and a superb celebratory cake. Our squire and one of the original founders, John Barker of Faithful City Morris Men addressed the men with a brief history of the side. Nothing stays the same and he mentioned the burgeoning numbers of the side over the years and the evolution of even our traditional border dances!

If it’s the Saturday before Christmas, then it’s the tour. This year was again a fantastic turnout, and we often wonder if any other side ever manages to get more men out, all in kit. It makes a superb day, leaving aside the rush and panic of Christmas preparations to enjoy the good company of so many who are up for an excellent day out. There were many highlights, from the generous welcome of the villagers of White Ladies Aston to dancing in the centre of Worcester. The new members each year, ensure that this wonderful tradition continues for many years to come.

As a bonus we’ll be able to present our Worcester, St Richard’s hospice with our bag from the day.

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So that’s it - done for another year till the ex-squires gather in October 2024 to arrange the next tour.

The Facebook page has links to photos – just search for Original Welsh Border or use this link http://tinyurl.com/OriginalWB

Mike Finn
Bagman

**Uttoxeter Heart of Oak Morris**

A total number of 53 events were considered long enough to be recorded and remain on this sheet (in comparison to 31 last year). Of the 53 possible events: 3 were cancelled by the organisers, and we withdrew (‘not attending’) from 6 events. Therefore, we attended in one form or another at 44 events. This is in comparison to last year where we attended only 20 events. This is a vindication of the decision made last year to have a joint dance schedule with Stafford. Indeed, it is doubtful whether we could have managed a single event as Uttoxeter on our own.

We applied for “We love Uttoxeter” grant funding to support our drive to attempt to recruit new members, but unfortunately had little response from the local organisations that we contacted to present and demonstrate ‘the morris.’

In a new initiative our Squire elect – Sam Egerton – made contact with the local media. This resulted in a recording session for Radio Derby and another session with both BBC and ITV television reporters and film crews.

The use of “morris book” has improved the visibility and decision-making regarding attending events. However, as events ‘disappear’ from the screen I’m not sure it is possible to again view the total year in order to perform the type of (spreadsheet) analysis shown above.

Thanks to everybody for their support in keeping the show on the road.

Graham ‘Rim’ Riminton
Bagman

**South West and Wales, Paul Reece**

**Overview**

In the main morris in the SW is moving into a very healthy state. Demand often outstrips a sides capabilities, consequently the morris calendar is potentially very full the whole year through. Those sides that have gone mixed have found a complete turnaround in their fortunes. While male only sides tend to find recruitment more problematic, they remain enthusiastic and positive in keeping their traditions alive and regular audience contact satisfied.

**Bathampton Morris Men**

Attracted three new members and had a great summer season. This included an East Cotswold and a twinning tour to Charenton near Paris. Idris Roker stood down after 30 years continuous service as Bagman.

**Bourne River Morris**

Have seen a couple of changes recently. We have a new practice venue at the Coach and Horses in Wimborne and we are now an all-inclusive side. We are planning a full season, but would welcome a few more dancers, male or female and another musician.
**Bovey Tracey Mummers**
Despite a declining membership BTM performed at the Stoke Gabriel Wassail which was a great success and very well attended raising £2000 for the local school. Next year will be their 50th anniversary.

**Bristol Morris Men**
Are now averaging ten at practice. Attended two fetes in the summer, but the highlight was the Bath DOD. No success as yet with recruitment, most interest is in playing the music rather than dancing. Our plan for the future is to dance out more and be more visible in order to raise our profile in the area. To this end our treasurer did an interview on the local morris for BBC Radio 2.

**Cam Valley Morris Men**
Had a very good summer with more bookings than usual. Numbers are increasing but could do with younger recruits.

**Chalice Morris Men**
Sadly, we lost Keith Fiddock and Roy Busby last year, but picked up a new member after Christmas. Returned to several pubs after a 20-year break and to Chippenham Folk Festival, which was well attended.

**Dartington Morris**
Since becoming mixed we have enough dancers for two sets and to put out dancers to King John and the Exeter JMO on the same day. Our North Skelton Longsword team performed at the Teignmouth Folk Festival and our Totnes DOD attracted eight local sides. Our first Autumn Ale proved a great success and will be repeated this year. Dartington currently has their first female Squire.

**Exeter Morris**
A very successful first season as a mixed side with a very full summer programme including attending folk festivals. We are continuing to grow and currently have an active membership of 30, which allows us to put up two sets.

**Gloucestershire Morris**
No report submitted

**Helier Morris**
A mixed side since 2002 to bolster numbers. We have concentrated on getting new recruits up to a dance out standard. Practices have proved so popular that they continued throughout the summer, and it is hoped to increase dance outs as proficiency increases.

**Lyme Morris**
A fantastic year following going mixed. We now have twelve members (6 male & 6 female), but we perform a lot, including our own Lyme Morris Day, this year on 13th July, which already has attracted 22 sides. Our only problem is finding musicians.

**North Curry Mummers**
We successfully performed our annual Boxing Day mummers play our only fixture.
Plymouth Morris
Completed a very long, successful and full season starting with our May morning on the Hoe and finishing with our Elizabethan mummers play and dancing with three sets and a Wassail at the Hoe Bowling Club this January. Just a WI event and our annual ceilidh in February to do.

Highlight of our season was our very pleasurable trip to the Helmond weekend with 18 dancers and our attendance at the Jockey Plough tour and Stafford Feast. We have added 3 experienced dancers and 2 musicians to our membership over the last year.

Sweyn’s Ey
Another great and full year as we go from strength to strength adding another 2 dancers taking our total to 15 with 3 musicians. We danced at Bath, Cardiff and Chippenham and started our year with wassailing and mumming events.

Taunton Deane Morris Men
We had a busy 2023 with 3 Wassails, a New Year event and our annual Easter tour and a Cotswold tour in June. 2024 marks our 50th anniversary with various events planned. We have 16 dancers and 5 musicians but find it difficult to attract new members.

Trigg Morris
We have been fortunate in attracting 3 new dancers over the past year which has helped to reinforce the side and keep us going during a busy and extensive season. Early pub closing has caused us to modify our programme for the coming season, which starts with our annual Easter Monday tour showcasing our extensive repertoire from the Stanton Harcourt, Bucknell, Fieldtown and Lichfield traditions.

The first Hayle DOD proved very popular with us last year and will feature again in our programme for the forthcoming season, as will our mummers plays during the winter season culminating in our January St Hygenus, founders’ day celebration. We elected Viv, a very competent dancer and musician, as our first female Squire in the autumn and are still looking to recruit additional dancers and musicians to strengthen the side.

Wessex Morris Men
Have had a decent year of regular bookings and weekly dance-outs in lieu of practice and remain one of the best sides in the South-West. Taught Morris at a Stag event at a brewery which was a great success, although recruitment remains increasingly difficult. We remain positive as our 75th anniversary in 2027 approaches.

West Somerset Morris
Although numbers remain static, we have been able to put on a programme with two sets during our recent summer and Christmas dance outs, including the Wessex and South Petherton Folk Festivals and the Exeter JMO. The 2024 dance programme is already very full. 2025 marks our 60th anniversary.

Wyvern Jubilee Morris Men
A largely unchanged year, however, recruitment remains problematic.
South East, Lewis Elliot
This year I prioritised getting out and meeting people. I have managed to meet the majority of sides in my area and have had a great time getting to know people. The morris sides in the South East area are, quite frankly, a lovely bunch of people. There have been more events than I have been able to attend, and sometimes a side's events have conflicted with another side’s events, so I have had to make my apologies. Over the next year I plan to continue getting out to know people – and shall hopefully be able to attend the events that I missed this year.

Below are the reports that I received from the sides I represent in the South East.

Men of Wight
The Men of Wight are coping well, on a good day we have two sides. We recruited two new members this year and lost none. Going mixed has saved the side from closing down, and the standard of dancing is good. A couple of older members don't get far off the ground but it’s not our policy to judge anyone as long as they are doing their best. Recently, we danced out on 16th December in Newport (with Moonshine, Oyster Girls and Guith) and on Boxing Day at The Dairyman’s Daughter at Arreton with Moonshine and Bakers Dozen. Boxing Day was very good with a large audience and good weather.

Victory Morris Men
Firstly numbers
They look quite good - we had thirty-nine paid-up members last year, although some of those are effectively retired and just keep paying subs to, they get to hear about what’s going on.

We usually get a decent side out on a Thursday, and we managed a good tour on May Day, a successful day of dance, and of course the London tour returned after a couple of years in abeyance. Also, one of our lads who owns a Narrow Boat organised a weekend in the Banbury area, which we managed to combine with visiting the Oxford Folk Weekend on the Sunday, which was great.

That's all the good stuff, but as bagman I have concerns about the outlook.

1. We are short of musicians, especially those willing to travel at weekends. This has got so bad that if one particular person is unavailable, we can't really go away anywhere, which is a shame, because in the past those sort of events were the highlights of our year. Obviously, we hope to do something about that if we can.

2. This unwillingness to travel also applies to a somewhat lesser extent to the dancers. We have a couple of younger lads who are willing to travel but have no money - we have taken to subsidising them out of any income we may get from paid bookings during the year, because without them we wouldn't have a side.

I wouldn't say our efforts at recruiting have been very successful so far, but a couple of new lads turned up to practice in September, and I am hopeful that one if not both of them might stick with it - if we could manage that every year, we wouldn't have a problem! I guess the moral is, recruitment has to be an ongoing thing - take your eye off the ball for a couple of years and suddenly you have a problem.

We have wondered about going mixed, but I don't detect any great wish to do so at the moment. This is in any case not something we could change without an AGM/EGM, so it’s not likely to
happen any time soon. We do have a mixed border-style side in the city, and they are of course hoovering up a proportion of our potential recruits, but that can't be helped.

To sum up, we are in reasonable shape at the moment, but that could go either way - I suspect that unless the situation improves, we will not be appearing at many if any JMO events in the coming year.

It certainly could be worse.

**Wantsum Morris Men**

Last year was a very good one. We dance out over 35 times plus practise's. This gave us more than enough income to keep us going and enough to donate to charities that we feel close to.

Highlights were, as always, starting the year with the Winchester Feast, Broadstairs Folk week, our Hop Hoodening in Canterbury Cathedral and London Day of Dance was great. We also celebrated a member getting married. A very late evening or early morning was enjoyed by all.

This year we hope to do the same and more if possible. We just missed out on earning some good money in a music video but made a good contact for the future, hopefully. 2027 marks 60 years of the Side so I/we are looking to do something big for that.

Recruited a couple of new guys but could always do with more. We are talking to local Sides to see about enhancing each other’s profile by dancing out together and advertising all local Sides in one flyer??

Luckily, JMO events were attended by one of our Side who helps them out with their I.T. He got to a couple.

I like the sound of a 2025 day of dance for the southeast. Go for it.

**Winchester Morris Men**

We started the year celebrating our Platinum Jubilee by dancing outside the Eclipse Inn, where we were founded 70 years ago, on 11th March. There then followed our more normal summer of dancing out over 14 Wednesday evenings, 8 of these shared with other local sides, and 8 other weekend dates. Of note this year, we participated in A Royal Celebration at Alresford Station on the Watercress Line over the Coronation weekend, joined Traditional Bampton Morris Dancers for their Whitsun tour and attended Martlets final Chichester Day of Dance.

We currently have 15 active dancers and 3 musicians. Last year we gained one dancer, the son of a member. This year we have recruited a musician.

**Kingston Spring Grove Morris**

Kingston Spring Grove Morris (KSGM) Report to ARM South East Region

Overall, this year has been an encouraging one with several dances having been brought back into regular use. Though, on occasions we have struggled with the “four-dancer” set being brought out to an appreciative audience to provide the breadth needed for the successful repertoire. The number of dancers who can be relied on for regular attendance has crept up, but we still mostly rely on our one ‘full time’ trusty Melodeon player. The introduction of the Morris Ring funded card reader has been a boon for the finances and one of our new members has proved extremely adroit at extracting payments from recalcitrant punters. The aim in the next year is to consolidate our
recent shoots of “growth” and continue to attract new members, whilst working to establish a Kingston Spring Grove style of the traditional Cotswold dances.

**Ewell St Mary Morris Men**

Ewell St Mary’s Morris Men continues its tradition of only male dancers and have had one new member joined us with no prior experience of morris having seen our Boxing Day tour of Ewell Village in 2022 and another recent joiner danced in on Boxing Day 2023. Following three members of the side leaving (one dancer on health grounds, one dancer with new external commitments and one musician moved away but may appear occasionally), ESMMM has 19 members including three musicians and three dancers who also play occasionally. One existing member is now resuming regular dancing after recovering from injury.

This leaves some concern about the long-term future of the side as we are not currently able to maintain our numbers. Recruitment is mainly through spectators being inspired to join the local side.

2023 was a year approaching normality, whatever that looks like, with a programme of regular evening dance-outs through the summer. Our own normal events (St George’s Day, our own day of dance, autumn minibus trip pre-Christmas wassails and Boxing Day tour with Mummers’ play) were well attended, but we were frequently short on numbers to attend other sides’ events.”

**Broadwood Morris Men**

Highlights of the year

Our Day of Dance is always a highlight for us.... with 19 teams attending in the centre of Horsham, dancing at 8 locations, and a happy meet-up for a bit of refuelling after the dancing had stopped.

Our Boxing Day and Wassail events always draw a good crowd, and the recent ones were no exception.

Our May Day and May Eve celebrations are ones that we enjoy as a side, so highlights for us. They are really more for our benefit, and for the die-hards that like to celebrate the coming of summer, than big crowd-pullers.

Concerns about the future

Average age of the side tends to increase one year for every year that goes by, so we have an increasing number of people with ailments that affect their ability to dance. Biggest concern is how many fit people will we be able to call on to put on a reasonable show for paid events in the future??

Current membership numbers and recruitment methods/ success/ frustrations

Our current active membership is around 20, of which approx. 25% would suggest that we don’t rely on them for events – Typically, we would get about 12 dancers who could commit to a popular event.

Yes, we have one really young recruit (under 18, a relative of one of the officers) and one 70 (ish) year old. We try to publicise “taster” sessions with handbills in public places ... Facebook local advertising and mentions in Folk Clubs. We try to support Scouts groups/schools that ask us to demonstrate/teach, this doesn't yield any new blood in itself.

How many events you have been able to perform at

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12 events (that were other than our usual Thursday evening performances) and 18 Thursday night stands.

What you expect of the Ring

Insurance cover. It’s good to have the central coordination of morris activities and news about what is going on in the various Morris organisations, but Broadwood have not been at the forefront of “moving the Ring forward”. We interact with the other sides in our area happily and that is really our sphere of activity currently.

**Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men**

Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men- Report for presentation to 2024 ARM.

2023 was a significant year for Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, being our Seventieth Anniversary. It was a busy dancing season, completed by a splendid dinner, which was enjoyed by many old friends and ancient Men. There was, of course, endless conversation of a ruminatory nature and much refreshed friendship. We enjoyed some rewarding set-pieces during the year: we danced at a race-day at Plumpton Racecourse (we must have impressed them because they have asked us to return in 2024!), we hosted the 2023 Fools and Beasts Unconvention. This included a day tour of Lewes and Brighton, which was enormous fun, dancing with a huge chicken, a big bear and others. We are a regular part of The Rolling Out of the Old Ale at Harvey’s Brewery in Lewes. Unsurprisingly, a favourite activity of ours. We danced at about 20 pubs during the season – about normal for us. Roughly half of these were joint stands with other sides: we are finding that joint stands are good fun, provide variety, are very sociable and less demanding on energy reserves! Clearly other sides are finding the same. The considerable maturity of Chancs is providing us with some challenges, in common with many other sides. We find that our dancing is no longer in the air as much or as far as we would like; and, whilst some of us can remember putting three sets up at the popular stands, we now mostly manage only one, and that might be only enough for six-man dances. Recruitment is the answer, but that’s more easily said than done. Morris-dancing is not sexy just now, and many sides are facing the same challenges. But we are positive; we are using our practice season to have a bit of a sort-out, we are working on some new dances which, we hope, will bring some fun into our performances, with the intention of inspiring audiences.

**King John’s Morris Men**

King John’s Morris Men had an enjoyable 2023, with approximately twenty dancing opportunities, including our day of dance in April, with guests from Dartington and Plymouth, our usual May Morning dancing at the Bargate, Southampton’s mediaeval gateway, with Red Stags Morris, and the New Forest Folk Festival (we are the opening act, with dancing, a mummers’ play and a sing around, and run morris workshops), together with pub nights, mostly on Thursdays, meeting Winchester, Bourne River, Sarum and even a trip abroad to the South Island to meet Men of Wight.

We also attended the funeral of the late lamented Jimmie Killner, musician and master rapper sword manufacturer, where the morris community numbered about fifty of the packed congregation at Bursledon; we sang both in the church and at the grave side.

Nearer Christmas, our mummers play appeared at numerous local venues and was performed on Boxing Day, where we traditionally perform “Border” dances, rather than our usual “Cotswold”. Our North West is currently in abeyance, mostly as a result of lower numbers than previously.
We also ran a further nine music and song sessions in the early and late parts of the year.

We acquired two additional members – one who has danced with us previously, and his brother-in-law, who is new to the morris and apparently thoroughly enjoying himself.

As with many sides, we need to recruit more dancers, especially given that 2025 will mark fifty years since King John’s were founded.

Long Man Morris
Long Man Report. I’m summarising for the last 16 Months I’d guess. Starting with the decision to open the side to women dancers. Since then, we have added seven new dancers to our numbers which has added some well needed positivity to the side. At most current practices we now have around 18 to 20 dancers with most of our experienced dancers now turning up on a regular basis.
We’ve also reintroduced, Boxing Day at Eastbourne Bandstand, our Wassail, Carol Service, and our Winter Programme, and we’ve newly introduced the Eastbourne Seafront walking tour. Looking to this year we are planning on expanding the Wassail and introducing a Mummer’s play into the Boxing Day stand. To summarise - it is ticking over nicely.

Greensleeves Morris Men
The highlights of the year were the Peasmarsh, Chipperfield and Great Ryburgh weekends - at the last of these we worked ourselves up to dancing pretty well. Morale generally OK despite declining numbers. No success in attracting new members. I haven’t kept a diary of what we did but we achieved all the traditional highlights of our annual programme including Clapham, Richmond and South Lambeth, albeit with a slackening-off on the Friday evening pub tours. Midsummer on the Thames with Kingston Morris was another highlight as well as performing locally in Wimbledon for the King’s Coronation weekend celebrations. Overall, we’ve kept going under Neil’s resolute squireship, but are wondering how long we’ll be able to continue.

Ravensbourne Morris Men
ARM Report for Ravensbourne Morris Men. At our last AGM, there was a change of Squire and Bagman. Richard Cowley had guided the side through Covid and beyond and has handed over to Andrew Shotton. Our Bagman, Aidan Hardy, has moved to Hampshire to be nearer children and grandchildren, being replaced by John Callaghan. Aidan is a hard act to follow and on behalf of the side, both Richard and Aidan have our thanks for the sterling work they have done for us. With Aidan moving, we have lost a regular member of the side, but have been fortunate in having a new, very keen and reasonably young, new member. However, like all sides, we are continually looking for new members. Since September, Ravensbourne have had a Beer Mile tour, performed mumming plays on successive weeks before Christmas and had our annual Wassail in the New Year. We have a full programme of Tuesday evening spots as well as looking to attend as guests at various weekend events.

And in my words...
North Wood Morris

North Wood Morris, Croydon’s own side, had a very busy year of dancing at thirty-three different events over the year around Surrey, Kent, London and France.

In February after a long illness our musician and previous squire, Brian Collins died. He held a PhD in music, was a University lecturer and a very skilled musician and played music for our team for many years. His death is a great loss to the team and we miss him.

We were lucky to get a booking to dance on the Kings Coronation day for a group of American tourists who were eager to join in with the dancing.

On the first of May we danced as usual at dawn outside the Croydon Alms-houses where it’s reported that morris dancers performed for May Day festivities as early as the time of King Henry VIII. North Wood organised a DOD London pub tour later in May with guest sides. During the Summer, North Wood joined the Greenwich Morris Men to perform in London and surrounding areas.

In September, we organised our usual three-day DOD weekend with guest sides dancing in France around Calais and at a rural museum where we enjoyed a lovely meal and beers before we danced in the big Cite Europe shopping centre. The next day we went along the coast to Boulogne-sur-Mer to dance in the Old Town and finished the weekend with a meal before returning home.

October saw us attending the JMO 20th Anniversary event in London which was an enjoyable day dancing with other teams despite the rain in the afternoon.

In December, we organised our annual Christmas DOD tour along the London’s South Bank with guest sides. We danced at the Christmas Riverside Market where we had permission to dance. After lunch in the Borough market, we danced at two more pubs before returning home from Blackfriars. The weather was very mild and sunny for our final tour of the year on Boxing Day dancing at a local pub with a good appreciative crowd.

North Wood, as with so many other teams, needs new members. It is proving hard to recruit despite trying different methods, so we have now started up a mixed side called North Wood Way Morris. They have three new women members and hope this will bring in more new members to both sides.
And in my words...

**Martlet Sword and Morris Men**
Sadly, on August the 30th of 2023, Martlet Sword and Morris Men danced out for the last time at The Lamb in Pagham. There was an excellent turn-out, they danced beautifully, and the BBC news were there to film proceedings. Martlets continue to meet socially.

![Martlet Sword and Morris Men](image1)

**East Surrey Morris Men**
No report received. One of my first outings as South East area representative was to visit an East Surrey practice. Since then, I have seen them dancing out a couple of times and have had the pleasure of joining in on the odd dance. It is a joy to watch their Sherborne, and I suspect that I shall be back to their practice in order to receive tuition.

![East Surrey Morris Men](image2)

**Ashdown Forest Morris Men**
No report received. I had the pleasure of meeting up with Ashdown Forest at the Sloop Inn this August. It was a lovely August evening, they danced very nicely, and I’m looking forward to meeting up with them again later this year.

![Ashdown Forest Morris Men](image3)

**Harry Taylor’s Morris**
No report received. Ask not what your Longborough tarts’ side can do for you, ask what you can do for your Longborough tarts’ side. Taylor’s have had a lot of people dance with them over the years, but some of them have passed through the side as quickly and as unscathed as sweetcorn... Taylor’s thoughts turn to attraction and retention. Answers on the back of a postcard please...

![Harry Taylor’s Morris](image4)

**Hartley Morris Men**
No report received. Always a pleasure, always a joy, and voices like angels - drunken angels. I have had the pleasure of meeting up with Hartley a couple of times this year, and I have been infallibly entertained. I look forward to inflicting my presence upon them periodically through 2024.

![Hartley Morris Men](image5)

**Thames Valley Morris**
No report received. I have had the good fortune to meet up with Thames Valley a couple of times this year. They continue to put on a good show and are now open to both men and women.
Blackheath Morris Men
Blackheath continue to exist and periodically terrorise the populace of South East London. This year we carried out our usual ragbag assortment of morris events - unfortunately, we drank too much and don't remember any of them. We celebrated the marriage of one of our members, and we raised a glass to the passing of another. We have lost a couple of men who have left the area (or, indeed, this world) and we have gained a couple of people through no fault of our own. That said, Blackheath are very conscientious about trawling the local pubs looking for wayward souls who might conceivably be tempted into the way of the morris. Unfortunately, most people are much too sensible – but still we try.

Buckland Shag Morris
No report received, though a visit to a Buckland practice is scheduled for this year.

St Nicholas-at-Wade with Sarre Hoodeners
No report received, and extra effort required from myself to make connections with the Hoodeners (though I have met a few people who are involved)

Stourvale Mummers
No report received. Looking forward to getting out to see Stourvale Mummers perform whenever they are willing to have me!

Woodchurch Morris Men
No report received. Woodchurch are upon my list of sides who are yet to suffer my presence. Would it be considered rude if I suggested that they could change their practice location to somewhere nearer a train station?

The World-Famous Ashdown Mummers
No report received. Emails exchanged. Hoping to see The World-Famous Ashdown Mummers entertaining the crowds later in 2024.

(Insert Name Here) Mummers
No report received. I did join the Mummers for their Carshalton tour in December - but was most disappointed by the lack of sprouts. Apparently, Mr Health and Safety had raised his head and said 'NEIN!!'.

Eastern, Matt Simons
Morris in the East 2023 — Matt Simons, Area Representative for the East

The Morris Ring appeared first in the east. Emerging from a meeting of minds in that university town on the fenland fringe, the nascent federation was constituted in the front room of Mrs. King’s home in Thaxted. In 2024, the spirit of cooperation and fraternity which gave rise to the organisation now entering its 90th year can still be found among morris clubs in the east of England.

On 16 September 2023, the four Norwich-based sides hosted a further fifteen clubs from across the region for a day of dancing in their fine medieval city. This was one of the five regional days of dance organised on behalf of the Joint Morris Organisations to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Licensing Act (2003). Of the four host sides, three (Big Jigs, Golden Star, and Kemp’s Men) are members of the Morris Ring. Furthermore, I am delighted that Golden Star — currently an associate
side — have decided to apply for full membership, and I hope that you will support them (see p. 23 and Agenda Item 6A).

Overall, it would appear that morris in the east is in a relatively healthy state, at least for the time being. The majority of sides which responded to my recent questionnaire reported modest increases to their membership. However, it is clear that a greater influx is needed to secure the future of clubs which depend on the regular attendance of older members. A couple of clubs report that they are in an especially parlous state — they “enjoy it while [they] can”. Since the last ARM, sadly Crendon Morris has folded and Blackmore Morris performed for the final time on New Year’s Day, though a few members of the latter intend to carry on the club’s name in some capacity.

When it comes to appealing for newcomers, it is quite true that there is “there no new thing new under the sun”, social media notwithstanding. Three clubs have recently opened up their membership to people of all genders. Whilst this has yielded success for these clubs, it continues to be true that most sides “find that personal contact seems to bring the greatest success. Our most recent members have all asked to join up from having watched us” (Blackmore Morris).

I stand by my forecast made at last year’s ARM that the time is ripe for all sides to exploit the current resurgence of interest in “folk” and traditional art in all forms by establishing and maintaining good working relationships with local media outlets. Rutland Morris are justifiably proud of the amount of coverage that they receive in both print media and local radio. I congratulate them for their persistence in seizing all opportunities for promoting a wider awareness and appreciation of morris. Most clubs are active — to varying extents — on social media, particularly Facebook and increasingly Instagram. In addition to their usual summer programme leaflets, two clubs (Thaxted and Peterborough) now also use business cards with QR (quick response) codes linked to their respective websites and social media profiles.

There follows short reports from member clubs in the east. Of the 19 sides (13 full members, 6 associates) in the area, I received reports from 15.

**Belchamp Morris — Cathy Fitzgerald, “Baggie”**

This year has been dominated by the loss of our dear friend, Grahame Stephens, long standing member of BM, larger than life character and fine dancer. He was diagnosed in January and lost his battle with Acute Myeloid Leukaemia in June. Sorely missed by his partner, Marion, family and friends, we all miss him in so many ways.

Our highlights from last year were having a week in May in Trebinje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, organised by Simon Tarrant of Blackmore Morris Men who is also a member of Belchamp Morris now! We were very well received, saw some beautiful places and had a great time. Another highlight was being one of the booked sides at Folk East in August, the crowds really enjoyed our performances and we had a brilliant weekend. We fielded strong teams for both of these events and put on good shows.

We have built up a good working relationship with our local Arts Centre in Sudbury and also with a charity we’ve supported financially, Stour Valley Mens’ Shed. The other charity we supported this year was MacMillan Nurses, in honour of Grahame, although he wasn't able to take advantage of their care.
Our demographic has changed over the last couple of years. We’ve had women playing in the band for years now, but over the last year we’ve gained 3 female dancers.

**Big Jigs — Steve Hickling, Bagman**

We had a busy year, starting in May with a trip to North Brabant (Netherlands) with some of Kemp’s Men for the Helmond Morris weekend with Plymouth, Utrecht and of course Helmond and a Dutch ladies’ side whose name I can’t remember [Maids of the Mill, methinks. Ed.]. A fine weekend visiting the very civilized Netherlands. That was followed by dancing into the Ring at the Thaxted Morris Weekend (a big thanks to Thaxted, especially Rob Evans) and a lovely tour of pretty North Essex with lots of sides we hadn’t met before.

We had our usual two mainstream festivals to dance at (Strumpshaw Tree Fair and Harlequin Fair), which we would recommend to everyone, followed by a couple of pub dance outs with local sides – with Rumburgh Morris at the Queen’s Head, Earsham; and Kemp’s Men at the Adam and Eve, Norwich. Another highlight was the massive East of England regional JMO day of dance organised by the four Norwich sides (Fiddlesticks, Kemps, Golden Star and us), blessed by huge numbers and hot and sunny weather! Lastly, we (with a bit of help from members of Kemp’s and Golden Star) hosted Letchworth Morris for a late September tours of Norwich city centre, dancing and drinking.

Too many highlights to list, but dancing in was a great honour and work is underway decorating our brand new stripey stick! One new member this year, bringing membership to a heady 11 people, in the shape of young Herbert now he’s turned 16. East Anglian morris dancers will be familiar with Herbert as he seems to dance with every local side! The coming year looks equally exiting, with another foreign trip on the cards.

**Blackmore Morris — Simon Tarrant, Squire**

2023 was a very quiet year for Blackmore Morris. We started the year with the expectation that it would be our last year because of our dwindling numbers. Then we were dealt a cruel blow by the death of stalwart member, Hamish Bremner, after suffering a stroke. But there were a few highlights: for some years we’ve danced on New Year’s Day at the Leather Bottle in Blackmore village, and we have always had our best audience of the year there. Other than that, a couple of our pub nights out dancing to modest audiences maintained a bit of the old magic.

We decided to try and re-capture that magic by dancing out for the last time on New Year’s Day 2024, with some help from our friends. We were joined by members of Chelmsford, Owlswick, Thaxted and Chanctonbury Ring Morris, and I felt it was a good way to finish. However, it appears that several members of the side are keen to keep Blackmore Morris going in some form.

**Cambridge Morris Men [aka The Travelling Morrice] — Matt Simons, Squire and Acting Bagman**

2023 saw a modest resurgence of activity for the Cambridge Morris Men after several fallow years. We turned out a full side on nine occasions and were represented at a further nine events, including the regular circuit of Ales and Days of Dance. In addition to this local activity, in July the Travelling Morrice returned to Suffolk for the first time in 50 years for three very pleasant days’ dancing in and around the Dedham Vale. Over the course of the tour, we had a total of 26 active men, and on the (damp) Saturday afternoon we were joined by the East Suffolk Men for three joint shows.
Though once very much a ‘town and gown’ club, in reality our links to the university are rather tenuous nowadays. Nevertheless, this is our legacy and we continue to enjoy the support of a few men who, though they ‘went down’ several decades ago, still return from far-off places for special occasions. We hope that the attraction will be especially strong this year as we approach our centenary. We also have a growing number of members who are recruited through invitation to the Travelling Morrice, and in 2023 we gained four young men through this route.

As a local club, there are signs of optimism, too. At the beginning of our practice season, in September, we welcomed three newcomers to the side: two experienced dancers and one novice. Looking ahead to the summer, we hope to resume a fortnightly programme of pub nights (Fridays) as well as some weekend events.

Following several months of organising — and countless hours of sorting and sifting — in September, the vast majority of our archive was deposited with the Cambridgeshire County Records Office in Ely. This not only includes the records of the CMM but also the complete sequence of logs of the Travelling Morrice. Though the ownership and intellectual rights remain with the club, these records are now in the care of professionals and will soon be available for researchers to consult on appointment.

In late June, the Travelling Morrice will return to the Cotswolds marking the centenary of the inaugural tour of 1924, out of which emerged the Cambridge Morris Men. We hope that you can join us on Saturday 27th April for our celebratory Spring Day of Dance (368th Meeting of the Morris Ring) — see p.2 for details and instructions for applying to attend.

**Colchester Morris — Robin Taverner, Bagman**
Colchester Morris managed a full programme of dancing out in the summer of 2023 and only had to cancel two events due to lack of dancers. Our main news is that we decided as a group (by majority vote) to open our side up to female dancers in order to be more inclusive and to keep our side alive. So far we have had 3 lady dancers join our side. We raised a healthy £460 for a local children’s charity on Boxing Day. We expect and hope to fulfil a comprehensive dancing out programme this summer.

**Devil’s Dyke Morris Men — Gordon Heald, Bagman**
Devils Dyke Morris Men remain in good heart. We can claim 17 dancers and 3 musicians. We have recruited a new dancer this year and with 2 recruited in immediately previous years hope to be sustainable. We practise all winter on Thursday evenings, dancing a range of Cotswold dances and traditions. In summer we dance out regularly at about 22 pubs usually on a Thursday evening. In addition we dance at about 5 other occasions during the season.

We support a charity each year and in 2023 were able to donate £1,562 to the Rooprai Trust.

**East Suffolk Morris Men — Richard Hughes, Bagman**
East Suffolk Morris Men had a busy 2023 with two new recruits, one new to Morris and the other experienced. We kicked off the year in traditional fashion dancing at the Dove in Ipswich on St George’s Day. Our May Day outing started dancing the sun up at Felixstowe and then touring up the Suffolk coast, dancing along the way.
Most weeks throughout the summer we were dancing at local pubs. The highlights of the year being a spot dancing at The Folk East Festival alongside Boss Morris and our summer tour of Somerset. We finished the year on Boxing Day dancing at Pin Mill on a glorious sunny December day before enjoying mince pies, a pint and carols in the sailing club.

We start 2024 with two new recruits, again one experienced and one fresh to Morris and a packed calendar.

Golden Star Morris — John Dimascio, Bagman
Golden Star Morris started the 2023 season with a strong side and with our regular Sunday practices we were well-rehearsed for what turned out to be a really good summer. Arguably we’re now back to "normal" following one thing and another during the first years of the twenties and count ourselves fortunate to have come out in excellent shape and have several new members who will be dancing out in 2024.

Whilst we don’t dance once a week at local pubs as do some sides, we had a full calendar of events; some away with other teams, at the National in Evesham, at The Gate to Southwell and Folk East festivals, some closer to home such as the JMO Eastern Region day of dance that we helped to organise with other local sides. There was also a Coronation fete and a couple of beer festivals amongst other local events.

We like to think of ourselves as a sociable group (which really helps recruitment), and two of the highlights were our own "summer camp" and a bus tour of North Norfolk — both events very well-attended by the side and a chance to relax together.

Good Easter Molly Gang — Daniel Kenning
On Plough Monday (8th January) we blessed the plough and danced and sang and ate and drank in some lovely places around Essex. We generally don’t publicise our activities any more than putting a modest poster in each pub, and this seems to work fine as we have had no contact from the media. We have slightly more people since last year, including some newer and younger members which is good. It is slightly difficult to assess our demographic due to the unparalleled effectiveness of the disguises worn by the dancers and musicians, and the fact that some men dress as women and some women dress as men.

Kemp’s Men of Norwich — David Ball, Bagman
Highlights of the 2023 season include:
• Mayday: Dance at dawn followed by a tour of the Waveney Valley;
• May: Visit to Helmond, maintaining strong links with our Dutch partners;
• Whit Tour: Dorset welcomed Kemp’s with great weather and locations;
• Sheringham Lobster Potties Festival / White Rose Morris 70th anniversary weekend: Kemp’s were able to attend both, despite being on the same day;
• East Suffolk: our yearly tour with Knots of May of Lewes. Always delightful;
• Norwich JMO 16/09: Kemp’s one of many sides enjoyed in the Fine City. We also actively assisted in arranging;
• Visit from Letchworth Morris 24/09: a lovely tour of the city with a great bunch;
• Pre-Christmas Norwich dance out: Great dance, company and beer;
• Banningham on Boxing Day: a Kemp's tradition with Mummers Play.
• Not to mention our regular Wednesday programme through the Summer months, visiting pubs all over Norfolk.

A lot of really good events enjoyed by all. However, it would be remiss not to mention that another highlight has been our practice regime, overseen by Foreman, Pip Conrad. This has enabled the wide repertoire performed by Kemp's. We are able to spend a weekend away and not repeat the same dance. This is due to marvellous leadership and encouragement in practice, with the capability to properly accept and involve the wide range of dancing ability present in the side. We are also blessed with wonderful musicians.

We have benefitted from some great, young and experienced dancers joining us. I am pleased to say two members, completely new to Morris, who joined in 2022, are still with us and enjoying their Morris. We have also benefitted with a new musician joining our ranks.

The team will be working hard to achieve as much in 2024 with Roland Wouters as Squire and David Ball as Bagman. We currently have 27 dancers and musicians, ages ranging from 17 to 86.

**Mayflower Morris Men — Geoff Douglas, Bagman**
Mayflower had a good year with the usual Thursday evening dance outs as well as two performances of our Mummers play. We also had several paid gigs at various organisations. Our 50th year celebrations culminated in an anniversary Barn Dance when we were able to catch up with 10 former dancers. Through the good offices of one of our members, we were able to publish a book detailing our achievements during our first fifty years. We look forward to a good year this year with a full programme of events.

**Peterborough Morris — Ollie Simons, Squire**
We have, again, managed to pack a lot into the last 12 months. Over the summer we performed at 24 pubs, mostly on Tuesday evenings. On six occasions, we were joined by another local side. Other local highlights included a Spring Fine Food Market at Burghley House, three consecutive days of dancing over the Coronation weekend, a welcome return to the biennial Hemmingford Abbots open gardens weekend, the annual John Clare Festival in nearby Helpston, and our regular appearance at the Peterborough Beer Festival (where, we were told, “it just wouldn’t be Tuesday night without the morris dancers!”)

In September, around 100 dancers and musicians from 11 sides attended our Day of Dance, which we are pleased to say has become a popular fixture in the regional morris calendar. Further afield, we attended the Thaxted Morris Weekend in June and in July ventured northwards to join White Rose Morris in celebrating their 70th anniversary.

Our membership remains stable with a core of around 12 dancers and 2 musicians. We also have a small number of ‘country members’ who support some of our weekend events.

**Rutland Morris — Nick Kimberley, Bagman**
2024 is a huge year for Rutland Morris, as the side is celebrating 50 years of morris dancing in the county. We have a celebratory dinner planned for July where we hope as many members past and present will be able to join us in Uppingham for reminiscences and frivolity. We also have a 50th
Anniversary day of dance planned for 12th October. It is also an important year because on 8th January the members voted unanimously to change our name from Rutland Morris Men to Rutland Morris and from now on welcome anyone who wishes to dance with us as full members. We followed this up with a successful ‘Have a Go ’Morris workshop which had 13 attendees, two of whom (both women) have started to join us at practices. We shall see how this helps to develop the side over the next few years.

2023 was another action-packed year, dancing at 48 locations in and around Rutland with several other highlights including Whittlesey Straw Bear festival, Leicester Morrismen’s 70th anniversary day of dance, Rutland beer festival, Peterborough Morris day of dance, Melton Mowbray beer festival and our own Rutland day of dance held in October. On the flip-side, in 2023 we also said farewell to our founder member Mike Harnett who died in September after a long illness. Mike formed the side in 1974 at a meeting in a long-since closed Uppingham pub, after bringing his knowledge and enthusiasm over from Stafford Morris Men following a move to Rutland with work.

In terms of numbers, Rutland Morris is pretty much the same as last year with a band of 3-6 musicians depending on availability (some play with more than one side), and up to 16 dancers again depending on availability and also fitness, with one new member joining us in 2023. While numbers are currently healthy, and on most occasions we manage decent numbers and often dance with 2 sides, we are also aware that increasing age and infirmity are not our friends, hence the decision to broaden our appeal to a wider membership to hopefully avoid dwindling in numbers to the point of crisis.

Thameside Mummers — Simon Hill, Squire
2023 was a pretty standard year for us. Things are gradually slowing down due to diminishing number of members. One long standing member left this year due to age, leaving us with a basic side of six with a few we can call on occasionally. A smaller side means less dynamic gigs, etc., which helps the downward spiral.

Christmas always a highlight. We appeared at our local pub for the 48th year on Boxing Day, and collected £500 for charity at various gigs and pub crawl. We have some old members in Suffolk and Norfolk so events there are well supported. The Locks in Geldeston for Beltane is a regular. We have our annual camp at Blaxhall Village Hall, which was well attended with camping, BBQ, ceilidh, pub performance and sing around.

We perform at shanty and Regatta type events in our home town of Leigh on Sea, where we do little cameos in between acts. Faversham Hop Festival was also a great success.

We have slightly amended some plays to take out racist language — not sure how popular championing St George, killing foreign knight, sword fighting and death is in some quarters nowadays. The bottom line is that after over 50 years we carry on. The loss of one more member could be fatal. We enjoy it while we can.

Thaxted Morris Men — Rob Evans, Bagman
Greetings from the world-renowned Thaxted Morris Men! A year has passed since our last report, and what a year it was. We have been extremely busy aspiring to get a side or representatives at as
many of the JMO days of dance as possible as well as our own events and a full summer pub programme.

Our weekend of dance was a huge success with around 270 people attending, this is about as many as we can cope with in a ‘normal’ Thaxted weekend year. The weather was warm and the company was warmer. With this our walking tour in late August was also a huge success, an intimate relaxed event with close friends. The Thaxted Ale in November was fully subscribed and great feats of dancing and merriment ensued until the small hours.

Recruitment has been positive with three musicians, two of whom are very experienced — joined from two other local teams that have unfortunately folded — and all are willing to dance. We have also had two young lads join us: a lad of a long standing Thaxted dancing family, and the legend that is Tyler. Tyler is just 7 but has been obsessed with Morris since he was a toddler. He can dance well already and has been in a lot of the national news outlet due to his obsession.

We have a new squire, Daniel Kenning, and we believe that we are in safe hands. Tommy Bassett is acting as dance foreman when Daniel Fox is unable to attend — this arrangement is good for everyone. Unfortunately, two of our men have become unwell: one had a fall and the other has heart problems. We wish them a speedy recovery and hope for their return.

We are trying out the ‘Morris Book’ app to help the organisation of the side and the initial uptake and feedback is very positive even amongst our more senior members.

South Midlands, Roger Comley
Waiting for report
Morris Ring Publications

**Matt Simons:** Editor of the Morris Dancer
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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/](https://www.themorrisring.org/)

The Morris Ring Google Group (MRGG). Private Forum for debate or announcements. [https://groups.google.com/group/the-morris-ring](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](https://www.facebook.com/TheMorrisRing)

Morris Ring Twitter: [https://twitter.com/TheMorrisRing](https://twitter.com/TheMorrisRing)

**Call for Contributions**

Any items of urgent Morris-related news, please send to me at bagman@themorrisring.org for inclusion in the next Newsletter.

If you have any photographs, you can send them to Duncan Broomhead, the Morris Ring Photo Archivist (duncan.broomhead@btinternet.com).

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).