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Newsletter No. 130

April 2023

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Future Events 2023

All events listed correct at time of publication. Please check the events page on the Morris Ring website or email bagman@themorrisring.org for latest information

- | | |
|--|---|
| 22 nd April | JMO Day of Dance 2023 – Exeter, hosted by Beltane |
| 2 nd – 4 th June | Thaxted Morris Weekend
<i>The fabulous Thaxted weekend of dance will be held on its traditional weekend in 2023, that is the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of June.</i> |
| 26 th – 27 th August | Saddleworth Rushcart – Ring Meeting No. 367
<i>It's back. Saddleworth Morris Men invite yourself and your side to attend the Rushcart in 2023, on Friday 25th August to Sunday 27th August (the Bank Holiday weekend).</i> |
| 9 th Sept | Belper JMO Regional DoD
<i>Changed location from Derby, more details will be published soon. Email bagman@themorrisring.org to register interest.</i> |
| 16 th Sept | Norwich JMO Regional DoD
<i>We invite you to spend the day Morris dancing in the historic city of Norwich. The four Morris sides based in the city; Kemps Men, Golden Star, Fiddlesticks and Big Jigs have joined forces to arrange a Day of Dance to which everyone is invited. Express your interest by emailing us - further details will be available in due course.
norwichdayofdance2023@gmail.com</i> |
| 23 rd Sept | Chester JMO Regional DoD
<i>More details to follow. Email bagman@themorrisring.org to register interest.</i> |
| 22 nd – 24 th Sept | Australian Morris Ale 2023
<i>Hosted by Marlee Morris and held in Fremantle, WA. Email stevencmansfield@gmail.com for details.</i> |
| 7 th Oct | Newcastle JMO Regional DoD
<i>Dancing will be from 10 am until 4 pm approx. Dance teams please apply to newcastlejmodod@gmail.com stating: team name, contact name and details (inc phone number), home base, dance style, and approximate numbers.</i> |

7th Oct

Bath JMO Regional DoD

We invite you to spend the day Morris dancing in the historic city of Bath. Somerset Morris, Holt Morris and Bristol Morris Men have joined forces to arrange a Day of Dance to which everyone is invited.

Bath has some fantastic dance spots, as well as some fabulous pubs to quench your thirst.

Booking form located here

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfqiE7w8xm5_AQQ3p1gAaUFsYPY2sNKxEtEwqoPBzZ8k0Jqpw/viewform?usp=sf_link

21st Oct

JMO 20th Anniversary DoD in London

Currently a placeholder, hoping to finalise details soon. If interested in attending email bagman@themorrisring.org

27th – 29th Oct

The Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts Unconvention 2023

Open to all budding or experienced Fools, Beasts and Morris Characters from any team from the Ring, Open or Federation, or independent. A truly JMO event. This year Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men are hosting the Unconvention as part of their big anniversary and it will be based in and around Brighton. Our base will be Henfield Cricket Club, Brighton Road, Henfield, West Sussex BN5 9RP. Form available at

<https://themorrisring.org/event/2023/oct/illustrious-order-fools-and-beasts-unconvention-2023>

Squires Massed Dances 2023

Massed dances are one of the things the Morris Ring can do well, they are made better if we can do them with some uniformity. With this in mind I have added notes to some of them so we are all doing the same thing. If your club has a different interpretation, please don't think for one minute I am trying to dictate to you a correct way of doing things, I just want us to put on a good massed dance for the public.

Adderbury: Black Joke
Lads-buncham

Bampton: Rose tree (finish on rounds)
Sidestep (to the tune of either Speed the Plough or the Quaker)

Bledington: Idbury Hill
Young Collins

Brackley: Jockey to the Fair (long version)

Bucknell: Queens Delight

Headington: Constant Billy (Foot up, Cross over, Back to back and finish on Whole hey)

Fieldtown: Valentine
Balance the Straw.

Lichfield: Vandalls (In the chorus show the first time and clash the second except the last time when it is show twice)

Letter to the membership from the Squire

Greetings!

Last year at the 2022 ARM, under the new constitution passed at that meeting, I was honoured to be elected as the first holder of the office of 'Squire Elect' established under that constitution, and I took over as Squire from Simon Newman in the course of the 2023 ARM itself. I should like to thank Simon for all the hard work and effort he put in since his election in 2020, especially seeing the Ring through Covid and bringing in a constitution fit for the times in which we live.

The Ring has been through many changes these past twelve years, and no Ring Officer can know what is going to come our way over the next few years. One of the things I want to do is to ensure that the Ring remains relevant to its members, and to keep in touch with you all by sending out the occasional message about what is going on and what we are doing, in addition to what appears in the Bagman's Newsletters. This is going to be the first such message.

It is very important to me that I am contactable by and responsive to our membership. The Ring exists to serve the member sides and I want to ensure that happens. I want to stress to everyone that if you or any member of your side have a Morris issue that is troubling you, or if you have a complaint or a bright idea about something, just write to me at squire@themorrisring.org and I will do my utmost to get back to you as quickly as I can. Also don't forget that each side has an Area Representative whose job it is to keep in touch with the sides in his or her area – do make use of these people, as they are keen to help. If you would rather contact me, feel free to do so. If you don't know who your area rep is, just ask!

I attend meetings of the Joint Morris Organisations (JMO) as one of the Ring's representatives, and it is the Ring's turn to chair the JMO in 2023. This year, in addition to the annual JMO Day of Dance (in Exeter on 22 April), the JMO is organising a number of local Days of Dance in September/October to mark 20 years since the Morris was able to get an exemption from some of the potentially more troubling provisions of the 2003 Licensing Act. Without this exemption, many of the public outdoor and indoor activities we enjoy might have had to be licensed, which could have killed off numerous traditional activities. You will be sent details of all the local events in due course, and we hope to see you at one of these events.

I wanted to draw your attention to a couple of important matters for sides that came up at the ARM. The first is the perennial problem of recruitment. The JMO recently organised, through the Morris Federation, an online workshop on the subject of recruitment. In this, several speakers shared their experiences of running recruitment campaigns. A recording of the workshop is available on Youtube at the link at the end of this paragraph and I would urge all Bagmen to share this with their side members as it is almost certain to contain some suggestion that you haven't already tried in your recruiting efforts. It is important to stress that recruitment is something we should think about throughout the year, and not just as the practice season approaches. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jp9ldwx6dtY>

Club archives were the subject of a very interesting discussion at the ARM. You may not think that your side's archive is particularly important, but no-one knows what will be

important in the future. Every team should know where their archive material is and have a plan for preserving it somewhere, particularly if the worst happens and the team decides to hang up their bells. It's good for each side to have a person responsible for the archive, and he/she should ensure that other members of the side know where the material is, and the archivist's family members should be aware of where it is, and what to do with it if the archivist becomes unable to look after it or suddenly passes away. There are stories of family members being completely unaware that a side's archive material was in their house and the whole lot going into a skip. The obvious place to deposit a side's archive is with your local County Records Office, and the Ring's Archive group (MRAG) recommends that sides contact their local office and find out what they would require so as to be in a position to act should the side fold. The MRAG hopes to produce guidance for sides on this very subject before long.

Lastly, I want to draw your attention to the relaunch of the Morris Ring web site (<https://themorrisring.org>). This is only the beginning as it has been moved to a new server with new software etc—we will be adding material and hope to include as many suggestions as we can from the Bagman's recent survey. We've spent many hours testing and checking, but should you come across any oddities, we'd be grateful if you could let us know using the contact form at <https://themorrisring.org/contact-morris-ring>. We thank in particular our webmaster (Martin Jones) and our web editor (Peter de Courcy) for all their hard work.

Anyway, I've gone on for long enough now. Remember to share this message with your members, and please keep in touch with me, especially if I can help with anything. I very much hope I will meet as many of you in person at some event or other over the next couple of years.

Take care, and all the best for the upcoming dancing season.

Nigel Strudwick

Bagman's Musings

April brings the sweet Spring showers, on and on for hours and hours!

They say it never rains but it pours. Well all I can say is it's been pouring pretty well in Warwickshire this week. I have to say though the blackthorn blossom and tulips are both looking marvellous.

Please find at the back of this newsletter the minutes of the ARM. Thank you very much to Jon Melville for filling in for me at the meeting, suffice to say I was able to make it back to Cannock in time for the feast!

The next 6 weeks are looking busy for many, with St George's Day, May Day and the Coronation our new King all coming in quick succession. Event reports would be welcome, and if sufficient photos are submitted we may well be able to coordinate a highlights reel to share on our electronic media channels.

As expected, we've had some last-minute enquiries for teams for Coronation weekend, so please don't be surprised to receive an email from me with a request for a team at a fete or nursing home. We fully appreciate how difficult it can be to raise a side at short notice, so please do not feel obliged to say yes because someone else hasn't thought ahead.

The Morris Ring website has recently been updated. This has been on the cards for a while but we finally commissioned Martin to carry out the project, and the results are quite nice to see. Please go and check it out when you are able. On that point, a reminder to all members that side contact details can be updated by logging into the website and going to the 'My Side Admin' tab. The same applies should you wish to obtain a copy of your side's insurance certificate. Thanks to Martin and Peter for managing the website upgrades, it all went quite smoothly all things considered.

A survey was run prior to the website update, the results of which helped to inform some of the changes made including a (hopefully) easier route to accessing insurance certificates. It was mentioned in the responses to the survey that there was a lack of online events as offered by another Morris organisation. As has been pointed out many a time, if you have an idea please let us know and we'll see if we can make it happen. We now have the Zoom subscription (available for all sides to use on request) which can enable such meetings if people are willing to give their time to them.

We are delighted to confirm that the Saddleworth Rushcart will be Ring Meeting No 367, please email saddleworthrushcart1@gmail.com if you are interested in attending. If you haven't been before, it is well worth supporting, and being on a bank holiday makes it a good opportunity for a long weekend in the majesty of Saddleworth.

We hope to make some more announcements about the JMO regional events in the Autumn very soon so keep an eye on your inboxes!

Onwards into the main 2023, see you round!

Cheesy

Report of JMO National DoD 2023 – Peter Austin

It was my pleasure to represent the Ring in Exeter on 22nd March 2023 at this event. Hosted by Beltane Border Morris on behalf of the Open Morris.

After the official cutting of the ribbon by Stella Brock, Lord Mayor of Exeter, the crowd was given a display of dancing by our own Exeter Morris. Several dancers were new recruits, and it was cheering to see Exeter have swelled their ranks since their decision to become a mixed side last Autumn. Beltane followed and were, as ever, were a feast for the eyes and ears.

There then followed the usual tours, and with up to 40 teams represented it was certainly a city alive with morris, even with weather that was typical of England in April. Unfortunately, I couldn't get round to see everyone dancing, but was able to see Lassington Oak and Dartington perform at separate locations. The day ended well down by the Quay, with the show dances rounded off with a massed Upton stick dance. Thanks must be given to Beltane and Open Morris for being gracious hosts and holding a wonderful event. Everyone I spoke to enjoyed themselves, which hopefully is a good endorsement of future meetings. The next national meeting will be hosted by the Morris Federation, but we are seeking a team to lead organisation for the 2025 meeting so please get in touch if you're interested.



Exeter Morris open proceedings outside the cathedral



Dartington jig away all cares (including the Morris Ring's rarely photographed website designer Martin Jones)

Notices

Archive Workshop

The ARM will be combined with the next Archive Workshop, which will be a follow on from the first Workshop held in Bedford last year. Last year we looked at general matters and paper archive material. This year we will look at modern media – film, photographs, audio and video tape. Hopefully there will be a display of Archival material and a chance to view some historical footage.

Can any current member of a Ring Side recall attending the 1997 or 1998 meeting(s)? If so, could they contact me at chairmrag@themorrisring.org.

Chris Wildridge, Chairman, Ring Archive Group

Podcast

Dr Simon Machin is community playwright and has written a play called Red Heaven about the Thaxted experiment (the Red Vicar, Conrad Noel and his friendship with Gustav Holst). He has also created an associated oral history project about Utopian Socialism (please see the link below).

<https://www.redheavenproject.com/>

You'll see that there are interviews about Daisy Countess of Warwick, Conrad Noel and his son-in-law Jack Putterill, Gustav Holst and the first Squire of the Morris Ring, Alec Hunter.

JMO Recruitment Workshop

In late February a panel was organised to discuss recruitment strategies some sides tried out. There was a general discussion around recruitment, which can now be seen here at leisure.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jp9ldwx6dtY>

Minutes of the 2023 Morris Ring Annual Representatives' Meeting, 4th March 2023

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

Jon Melville took minutes as a stand in for Peter, who managed to find a concurrent engagement.

1. Attendees and apologies

Sides represented:

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

Apologies: Men of Wight, King John's, Winchester, Royal Preston, Richmond on Swale, Traditional Ilmington, Westminster, Dartington

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

- Minutes of the 2022 meeting available on the Morris Ring website
<https://themorrisring.org/sites/default/files/docs/bagnews/arm-minutes-5-march-2022.pdf>
- Matters arising from the minutes – *no matters arising*.

Handover of Chair from Simon to Nigel.

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

a. Squire of the Morris Ring

Accepted, proposed *Charlie Corcoran, seconded Dave Loughlin.*

The incoming Squire commented that he had attended a number of JMO meetings, and has taken over as Chair.

b. Bagman of the Morris Ring

Accepted, proposed *Jon Melville, seconded AN Other.*

c. Treasurer of the Morris Ring

The Treasurer was unable to present a summary of the accounts – new auditor Phil Butlin (East Surrey MM); accounts not available. Banking has moved to Nat West; Jigs Instructional now has a Ring account. Cashless card reader initiative has been taken up by 48 sides. The Treasurer proposed extension of this project for a further six months – proposed Jon Melville, seconded Simon Newman, Earlsdon MM.

Accepted, proposed

d. Chairman of the Advisory Council

Accepted, proposed *N/A*

e. Morris Ring Archive Group – *Charlie Corcoran (Leicester MM) requested information for the Log Books. Barry Care (Moulton) raised the issue of individuals' archival paraphernalia, how this is recorded (what and where) and how it could be passed on. John Edwards (Stafford) outlined discussions from the morning's AG meeting: Ring items have gone to Essex Records Office; what about clubs' or individuals' material and how can this be donated to local Records Offices? Velson Horie (Manchester) will lead on establishing a protocol. Nigel Cox (Whitchurch) added the issue of sides which have folded or are "fading away." Colin Andrews (Exeter) commented that the dance database also records dances from defunct sides. John Jenner (Cambridge) has been assisted by Matt Simons (Peterborough inter alia) in clearing his current house; he is unable to donate document copies where originals exist elsewhere or physical artefacts – digitisation is undoubtedly the way forward. Velson Horie (Manchester) outlined the scope of the project, which will commence with a questionnaire on what material is held. Barry Care – no worries about copyright, John Jenner disagreed regarding attribution of photographs. Emma Melville (First Class Stamp inter alia) asked what could be done when material held by deceased individuals may not be understood by their families. Matt Simons (Peterborough) – Ivor Allsop longsword archive is being curated by Phil Heaton for display in Goathland. Rob Evans (Thaxted) commented on the vast photographic archive on social media and in digital form.*

f. Webmaster and publications

See report. *Pete de Courcy (Kennet) thanked survey respondents, whose suggestions are being implemented. The link to the YouTube page is now live.*

- g. Overseas Bagman
See report.

5. Elections

Peter Austin ratified by the Squire to continue in post.

Area Representatives (year of election in brackets)

East Midlands, Charlie Corcoran (2019)

South Midlands, Roger Comley (2003)

Northern, Darren Nugent (2021)

Northwest, David Loughlin (2008) - *reconfirmed*

Northeast, Brian Pollard (1994)

West Midlands, Matthew Turvey (Shakespeare) (2021) - *reconfirmed*

Eastern, Matt Simons (Peterborough) (*ratified at area meeting*)

South East, Fred Hands (2018) – Lewis Elliot (*Westminster, Greensleeves et al ratified*)

South Wales and West, Paul Reece (2017) - *reconfirmed*

Ratified by the areas.

Area Meetings:

Paul Reece (Plymouth) – there is a need for musicians' workshops / instructionals. Helier are struggling for members.

Roger Comley (Letchworth etc) – outlined potential opportunities for overseas travel.

Dave Loughlin (Chester) – recruitment is becoming a more pressing matter. The Squire recommended the JMO online workshop on recruitment.

Matt Turvey (Shakespeare) – considering opportunities for cross-area collaboration.

Matt Simons (Peterborough) – improved reception from the public and press, an opportunity which needs to be exploited.

6. Area Representatives' Reports

East Midlands – report in appendix

South Midlands – report in appendix

North West – report in appendix

North East – report in appendix

North – report in appendix

West Midlands – report in appendix

Eastern – report in appendix

South East – report in appendix

South West and Wales – report in appendix

7. Future events

25th March

Letchworth Morris Musicians' Workshop

Letchworth Morris are arranging a musicians' workshop on Saturday 25th March 2023. This is also the day of the Letchworth Ale and attendance at the Ale in the evening is optional and can be booked separately.

<https://themorrisring.org/event/2023/mar/letchworth-morris-musicians-workshop> for details

22nd April

JMO Day of Dance 2023 – Exeter, hosted by Beltane

Plenty of spaces available, contact bagman@morrisring.org to reserve space

2nd – 4th June

Thaxted Morris Weekend

The fabulous Thaxted weekend of dance will be held on its traditional weekend in 2023, that is the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of June.

22nd – 24th Sept

Australian Morris Ale 2023

Hosted by Marlee Morris and held in Fremantle, WA. Email stevencmansfield@gmail.com for details.

Rob Chisman (Fools and Beasts) – application forms for the Unconvention 27-29 October in Brighton (hosted by Chanctonbury Ring) will be available in the next Bagman's Newsletter. Cost £80. All welcome.

Ed Worrall (Saddleworth) – Rushcart is on the Bank Holiday weekend and is intended to be a Ring Meeting.

Peter Copley (Stafford) – Stafford & Uttoxeter 2nd September Jack Brown commemorative day of dance.

John Jenner (Cambridge) – converting CMM Spring Day of Dance to a Centenary Ring Meeting in 2024 (April 27th).

JMO will be hosting a series of Regional Days of Dance to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the passing of the Licensing Act, hosted in September/October by local sides – Derby, Norwich, Chester, Newcastle, Bath, London.

8. Date of next meeting

Oak Farm Lodge is booked for 2nd March 2024. Thanks to Peter Copley (Stafford) for organising. Possibility of online facility will be investigated in the coming year but clarification would be needed around

9. Any other business

Clive duMont (Bristol, Whitchurch) – is there a need for a Ring / JMO to seek a benefactor for a home for elderly morris people? Ed Worrall (Saddleworth) thanked him.

John Jenner (Cambridge) had a request for a history of the Ring Musicians' badge, which was published in Ivor Allsop's regalia booklet; Charlie Corcoran (Leicester) updated it and has copies available.

John Edwards (Stafford) is closing down his Morris Histories website; much of the content has been transferred to Colin Andrews' database; individual sides can edit their own information thereon.

Barry Care (Moulton) – Paul Care is now landlord of the Artichoke and welcomes all morris dancers.

Meeting closed at 14:40.

Appendices – reports and other documentation

4. Officers' reports

a) Squire of the Morris Ring

Squire's Report

Over the last 12 months I have had the privilege of representing the Morris Ring at a number of events. Particular highlights have included:

- Meeting the Vice Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside Robert Owen as part of our role hosting the Joint Morris Organisation's Day of Dance in Liverpool
- Playing with the musicians leading Moulton Morris Men's May Cart
- Being invited to take part in the procession as part of Thaxted's weekend of dance as well as taking part in the local tradition of bringing flowers to the current residents of the house where the Morris Ring was constituted in 1934
- Attending Letchworth Morris' Ring Meeting, joining in with the celebration of their centenary
- Representing The Morris Ring with Earlsdon Morris at various folk festivals over the summer including Warwick Folk Festival, Shrewsbury Folk Festival and Bromyard Folk Festival
- Speaking to the congregation during the Sunday Rush Bearing service at Saddleworth Rushcart and being made an honour member by Saddleworth Morris, a truly special moment for me.
- Being asked to play for the Morris 18- 30 weekend in York
- Attending Anker Morris' Ale
- Exploring the pubs of Birmingham on Jockey's Plough Tour

I would like to thank all those who invited me to join them for their events and ales over this last winter, this includes Peterborough Morris, Ripley Morris, Leicester Morris and Kennett Morris to name a few, unfortunately circumstances did not allow me to attend but I was extremely grateful to be invited.

At last year's ARM we put forward a new constitution which was accepted by the membership. So far, I have not been made aware of any issues arising as result of the new constitution that is now in place. I hope that the Morris Ring continues to move forward as an association and that we now have a constitution and the procedures in place to enable it to do so with as few barriers to our enjoyment and participation as possible. I would like to once again thank all those involved in this process.

I would like to thank all the members of the Advisory Council for their support and their friendship, I look forward to sitting on the council for the next 6 years and offering my support to Nigel and the next squire after him.

I would also like to thank Clayton, as Treasurer, for his work in changing the accounts from HSBC to NatWest, this has not been the most straightforward process and a lot of time has been spent on this. Again, I would like to say thank you to him for processing all the repayments to teams who have bought card readers. I hope the card reader initiative has worked for those member teams who opted in.

Peter Austin also needs a huge dept of gratitude as he has been my right hand man throughout, he has a huge amount of patience and is a huge asset to The Morris Ring. I hope he continues in his role as Bagman for some time to come and wish him all the best in the future.

In addition to attending events, I have also undertaken my duties in representing the Morris Ring at a number of JMO meetings. 2023 will see the 20th anniversary of Morris dancers from all three organisations joining together at Trafalgar Square in protest to legislation that threatened the existence of live music and performance under changes to the licensing act. Fortunately for all of us, the Morris was given exemption status. This year the JMO are looking to host a number of regional days of dance, as well as a finale which will take place London to mark this anniversary. Though involved in the initial idea stage I have left the particulars of these events in the capable hands of Nigel. As Squire-Elect he has done a cracking job so far in attending additional planning meetings and most recently chaired the annual JMO meeting under my watchful eye. I wish Nigel all the best for his Squireship, I know he will do a brilliant job and I hope you all give him the same support that you have offered to me

Simon Newman; Squire, The Morris Ring

Simon Newman, Squire

b) Bagman of the Morris Ring

What a difference a year makes. This time last year in the UK we were still grappling with the Omicron variant of Covid-19. Meanwhile closer to home, as officers we were promoting the proposals for the new constitution and supporting documents, and considering at where to go next, as it looked like 2022 would be our first relatively normal year. Boy were we wrong about that, I just hope we can have a government lasting more than 5 weeks going forward!

Thanks to everyone who's invited the officers to join in their events this past year, they are greatly appreciated and offer us the chance for us to properly engage with teams who for various reasons may not be actively involved in the daily working of the Morris Ring.

Alongside the usual events which are staples in many diaries, we were the guests of Letchworth Morris at a fantastic Ring meeting in July. We all had a fantastic time, and as ever I'd like to encourage sides to consider hosting their own Ring meetings as we always need hosts. Events need not follow the traditional weekend format, and indeed may not be distinguishable from a normal day of dance, but we would really like some teams to volunteer to take on the challenge. Further, it would be great if teams who haven't hosted such an event before would consider it, as we have a wide collection of knowledge available to help if needed. Any interest as always can be directed to bagman@themorrisring.org. The coronation of our new King will be a great opportunity to put ourselves out into our communities and participate in the celebrations, so if any support is needed to deliver performances don't hesitate to ask. Such events are a chance for us to bridge the gaps in our neighbourhoods and communities.

The acceptance of the new constitution at the last ARM has largely seen no change in day-to-day operations, and I'm pleased to report no one has had cause to use our new complaints procedure

either! Again, thanks to everyone who supported this process and hopefully it will stand the Ring in good stead in the years to come.

Sadly, we've lost a few teams this year from the membership roll for several reasons, which is sad, but we will keep working to support teams where we can. This is a time for us to look forward and work collectively to further the interests of morris across the country. Individually and collectively, we need to reach out and keep building relationships locally and nationally. Teams that are going out more frequently often stand a better chance of recruiting and retaining new dancers, so we all have a role to play in helping this. This is by no means limited to the Ring either. Our friends in the Morris Federation and the Open Morris are facing some of the same issues, so we must continue to offer the hand of friendship and build those bridges, and so strengthen the community of morris as a whole.

On the subject of the JMO, please keep an eye out your emails for announcements as there are a series of events planned for the Autumn. These are to celebrate 20 years since the 3 morris organisations came together to lobby the government of the day to make provisions for our art in the 2003 Licensing Act and will be around the UK hosted by teams from all 3 orgs.

Finally, I'd like to say thanks to Simon as he steps down from the role of Squire and Nigel takes up to torch. Here's to another year dancing!

Peter Austin, Bagman

c) Treasurer of the Morris Ring

1 Introduction

This is my 4th Treasurers Report. At the time of writing, the accounts have nearly been completed and will be published, but I can confirm that our underlying finances are very sound and for another year I have no intention of changing the current subscription structure. As I'm sure the other officers have mentioned that 2022 will be remembered as the year things got back to normal.

2 Membership

Standard renewals fees were unchanged;

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

Full	£50	Associate	£40	Joint	£30
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3 Insurance

Our insurance cover that is arranged as part of the JMO was in place for 2021 was with – Ansvar which still gives sides excellent value for money.

4 Classes of Membership

Our 2022 membership renewals for 2023 consist of;

Full	122
Associate	28
Joint	3
International	5

There are a number of sides that 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 - attended no events 2022 after the ARM and was largely shut down.

Archive Fund – continues to support this important work.

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

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

Cashless refund programme was taken up by 37 sides where the Ring refunded up to £100 the purchase of a card reader. £2655.89 was refunded. This equates to an average refund of £71.78. The programme is running till the 2023 ARM so there are a number of sides taking part since January this year in addition to the above figures.

5 General policy and financial reserves

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

I moved the bank account to NatWest which took an age. This is proving to a good move as it offers additional facilities that HSBC didn't.

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 will be transferring the website to a new platform during 2023 which will offer a more future proof base with greater flexibility than currently. Natty Web Developments will be overseeing the transfer and upgrade

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

Regards,

22nd February 2023



Clayton Francis

Treasurer

The Morris Ring

Clayton Francis, Treasurer

d) Chair of the Advisory Council

We met twice during the course of the year. Once directly after the ARM and again in October 22. We looked into physically meeting up in October, as we had traditionally done pre covid however to get as many people as possible involved we used Zoom. I feel it may become the norm. Having, hopefully, put the Blackface issue and covid behind us we felt able to move on and discuss such matters as issues arising from the new the constitution (all administrative), JMO days of Dances (you will hear more about this soon if you haven't already), the Squires cashless machine's initiative, and various other minor issues.

One plea I will put out to the membership is please consider if you are prepared to become an area rep in the future. Even if your area has a strong and effective rep at the moment, at some point they will want or need to stand down and someone else will be required. I was West Midlands rep for about 10 years and found it a pleasant and rewarding job that can get you out and about without much hassle or responsibility just two meetings and one report a year. If you are interested in the future, please let yourself be known to the Bagman, Squire, Chair of the AC or local rep.

Pete Simpson

Chair of the Advisory Council

e) Morris Ring Archive Group

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

Member	Mike Garland
Member	Velson Horie
Member	Derek Schofield
Member	Matt Simons

Introduction

This report covers activities of the Group for the period from the ARM 2022 onwards.

MRAG Meetings 2022

The Group meeting took place at the ARM in March 2022. The annual report was submitted to the Officers and the ARM.

Chairman's report

Geoff Douglas and I met with Chris Lambert, Archivist, ERO for our annual meeting in October. These meetings are an important part of relationship building with the ERO. We discussed an issue raised in Geoff's report.

After delays resulting from the impact of Covid 19 on the Essex Record Office I can report that the digitisation of Roy Dommett's notes on dance traditions is complete. The next phase will be developing the meta data [search terms] consistent with ERO archival protocols with the aim of publishing the material [with the exception of Abingdon and Chipping Campden at the request of both Sides] through the Essex Record Office website.

The Archive Group has been working on providing advice to members of the Morris Ring on the terms of deposit should any choose to deposit them in their local record office or to the Morris Ring Archive in Chelmsford.

Morris Ring Archivist: Paper and Film – Geoff Douglas

After discussions with the Chair A small team of volunteers have initiated 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. It is an important process to validate the material thought to be in the archive and is part of the project to digitise significant parts of the MR Archive and make it available online.

Keeper of the Logbooks – Charlie Corcoran

Sorry but there is nothing to report re Logbooks. I have responded to a couple of requests for information and shared a few interesting snippets that I have come across but even allowing for Covid cancellations and isolations I have received nothing new to add to the Logbooks for several years. It has to be up the side(s) organising Morris Ring events to provide the stuff.

Photographic Archive Report 2022/23 - Duncan Broomhead

It has been another busy year for the Morris Ring Photographic Archive, with new acquisitions coming in, and more importantly, plenty of photographs and information going out.

Amongst the acquisitions were two large ones. One was a set of 160 photos, taken between 1949 and 1959, from the albums of the late Robert Robins, and passed to the Archive by Roger Hancock of Trigg Morris. The other, was two more folders of research material, donated by Pruws Boswell.

This included 130 photographic slides and five NW morris sticks, including two 125-year-old sticks, from the original Preston Royal Morris Dancers. This work is still ongoing

Charlie Corcoran completed the indexing of the David Campbell photographs of Thaxted Ring Meetings, which covered the years 1956 & 57, and 1962 to 1973. I am delighted that I have since been able to supply copies from this collection to three people who were researching their sides history.

I have also supplied photos and information to the following:

- a) Research into long defunct Ring side
- b) Mike Heaney's forthcoming book 'The Ancient English Morris Dance
- c) Two illustrated talks.
- d) A proposed academic paper
- e) A magazine article.
- f) A display at a village fete
- g) The VWML
- h) An American researcher
- i) A Dutch researcher
- j) Research into early 20th century morris
- k) Plus, other collectors, and researchers, with overlapping interests.

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

Although all major development of the Morris Dance Database (MDDDB) has now been undertaken, a few additions have been made to the information displayed. There is now a facility for teams to show participation in seasonal customs, such as Mumming or Wassailing, and place where any information about the team's archives can be added. So far, the latter has been little used, and is aimed at sides that have become defunct or are likely to fold. Shortly to be added are boxes where date of formation and demise (where appropriate) can be added, though this information can in many cases be found on John Edward's Morris Wiki site. In the Links section, there is now information on Carnival Morris, which Duncan Broomhead has supplied.

Currently over 1400 teams are listed, of which 990 are still active, with 760 situated in the UK. There are still a significant number of teams who have not yet posted much detail about their repertoire or taken up the opportunity to appoint a team editor for their entries on the database. There are over 4,300 dances listed, nearly half of which are Cotswold and just under a quarter of the rest Border style. The provenance of many new dances, particularly of Border style is still an on-going challenge and any assistance in this area would be much appreciated.

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

There has been very little activity with regard to new dances received by me or requests for information over the past year. Woodside have deposited the notation for dances which they devised. I have also received from Duncan Broomhead a copy of Prue Boswell's notes on many North-West dances.

I am aware of a considerable number of new dances, in various styles, that appear in the repertoire of sides listed on the Morris Dance Database website. Wherever possible I encourage sides to

deposit a copy of notation of new dances with the Notation Officer of whichever national organisation they belong to.

Sword Dance Archive Report 2021 – Phil Heaton

The Sword Dance Archive continues to grow and has had various requests for information and a few queries looking for confirmation of other's wisdom.

In conjunction with Goathland Plough Stots there is a project ongoing to research the East Cleveland teams and especially the Loftus Sword Dance using the stories of dancers willing to pass on their tales.

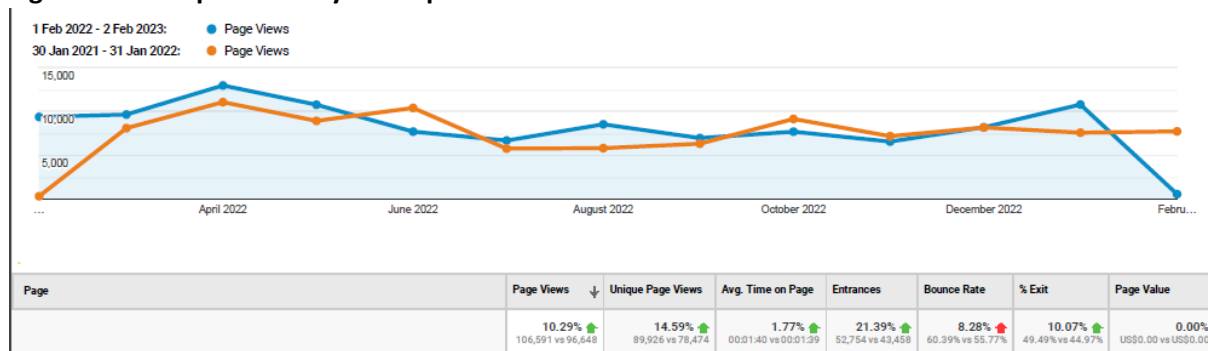
The Dancing England Rapper Tournament (DERT) has begun to collate both results and team participation Data found in the Archives as it develops again into the large annual event that it became before the pandemic.

f) Webmaster and publications

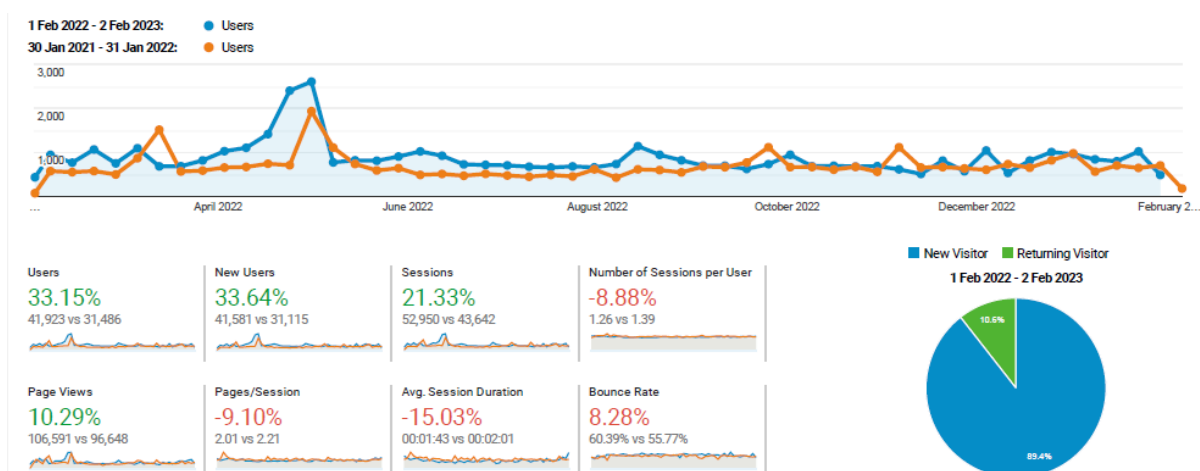
After 10 years, the current software version will soon be out of support and a full upgrade has been approved for this Spring. We have considered the alternative of other software and suppliers, but even though the new Drupal conversion will require significant effort and costs, ballpark figures for other options are far greater and Martin Jones, the present (excellent) system designer and technical support, will carry out the upgrade in the next few months. Included in this Newsletter is a survey giving you an opportunity to offer suggested improvements to add to my own wish-list (obtainable on demand). We'll post progress on the website – and perhaps attract even more page views!

As you will see from the attached our pages are already much viewed – I'll leave you to interpret the analytics, but we're doing well – and the investment in the upgrade should make it even better.

Page Views compared to my last report



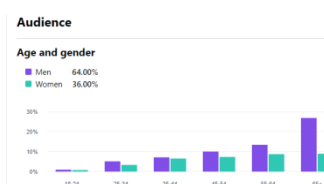
User Views compared to my last report



We've added another hundred Facebook followers who now total over 1700 and posts are reaching over 2500 views per month. Two thirds of our audience identify as male, the majority over 65!

To be fair, Facebook itself is being deserted by youngsters ...

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



g) Overseas Bagman

Having taken over the job from Nigel Strudwick after his election as Squire elect at last year's ARM, I have had the usual learning curve of how best to help our overseas clubs and the Squire and officers. I've no doubt this will be an ongoing task! However, below is some information received from overseas clubs on their upcoming activities, UK sides they are planning to host, and their upcoming trips over to the UK.

If your side is planning a foreign trip, please get in touch and let me know your plans, especially if you are planning to meet up with one of our Overseas clubs. It's always interesting to hear how far Morris sides travel around the world and the events Morris is represented at. A report for the Bagman's newsletter is also welcome. Extra points may be awarded for the furthest distance travelled!

Ed Worrall, edworrall@gmail.com, Morris Ring Overseas Bagman

Past Treasurer and Squire of the Morris Ring

Overseas club reports received

Silkeborg Morris Men – Midtjylland, Denmark

"It was with great sadness we last week received the news that Bob Dickson has passed away. Bob died Tuesday 10th Jan. 2023. He was born 15th Nov. 1945, so he was 77.

Bob moved to Denmark in 1975 (as) did his good friend Pete Hockings. At the time they were both members of Shakespeare Morris. In 1977 they started Silkeborg Morris and we have been an active side ever since. Pete returned to England more than 20 years ago. He unfortunately died in 2017.

We Danes have naturally taken on official roles within the side, but Bob remained our anchor and connection to the UK. He will be sorely missed as a dancer, an inspiration and a very good friend.

For the time being we hope to carry on. We meet fortnightly to practice. We have no venues planned at the moment but hope to attend a ring meeting or day of dance in England either this year or 2024.

On behalf of Silkeborg Morris Men, Christian Norgaard, bagman"

Vancouver Morris Men – British Columbia, Canada

".... here in Vancouver our "season" runs year-round. Indeed, December and early January are quite busy for us... as busy as May/June. So, in many ways, we're just coming "off" a busy period. Indeed, today (Jan 15) is the end of our Winter busy period (comprising celebrations of the Winter Solstice, 12th Night and Plough Sunday): today we're wassailing the apple trees at an orchard/cidery up the valley from Vancouver near a town called Langley.

Traditionally, we perform Welsh Border Morris during the Autumn (Fall) and Winter, including a period of East Anglian Molly dancing in Early January. However, the Covid pandemic created havoc for us (and I'm sure, many other sides) with the result that we haven't danced East Anglian Molly for a few years now - we hope to get back to it for January 2024.

After today, our diary eases up and tend to liven up again in April with St George's Day celebrations, followed of course by May Day. We are planning a dance-out at the end of January, and a Pancake Day event with the local women's side in mid-February but, apart from these two, we don't have a lot on our 2023 schedule yet. However, there are typically a number of annual Spring/Summer events at which we perform.

Unlike most English sides, we don't have enough country pubs (nice ones, anyway) to enable us to set up a regular weekly schedule of visits and dance-outs. During the Summer, we plan a few of what we call "neighbourhood tours" during which we perform at (or near) a few "watering holes" - we certainly end up at one afterwards!

We always tell interested parties to keep an eye on our website (www.vancouvermorrismen.org) where we post details of our upcoming performances, but usually no more than a few weeks in advance. Our website also typical contains photographic records of our various dance-outs.

Graham Baldwin - VMM

Perth Morris Men – Western Australia

You will have seen from our last report in the Ring magazine that although PMM are not particularly active, we continue to exist, and dance out a few times each year. We still have a dozen men, although some now live far from Perth, so dance outs depend on one or two of these members being in town, (our last stand before Christmas was) December 20, a Christmas get-together with The Fair Maids of Perth, (a Northwest female side).

There are only two definite dates pencilled in for 2023 so far:

- May morning, on which we always dance up the dawn with the other Perth-based sides
- The Australian Morris Ring Annual Ale, which will be held in Perth and will be held 22nd to 24th of September

The Ale is being organised by Marlee Morris, and they (and we) would welcome any Morris visitors. With post-covid travel now opening up, it may be that a few UK-based Morris people will be visiting relatives in Oz. It might be an ideal opportunity for the Overseas Bagman to go on a fact-finding mission to the antipodes! [I wish –Ed]

Terry Sweet – Squire, Perth Morris Men

Utrecht Morris Men – Province of Utrecht, Netherlands

We start this year at Maartens new home with an old/new year's party. We'll probably dance on Kings Day (April 25th) and Wim Lammers Memorial Day (May 13th)

Leeds and Yateley are both planning to visit the Netherlands and meet a day in/with Utrecht: -

- 12 to 15 April 2023: -Leeds Morris Men is coming to the Netherlands. They start in Delft and visit us in Utrecht on Saturday 15 April. Dancing in the city and eating together afterwards
- 21 to 25 June 2023: - Yateley Morris Men arrive in the Netherlands. They will arrive in Utrecht on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 June. They propose to have an informal meal and drink together on Saturday evening. Dancing together on Sunday in the city. They will return to England on Monday

(As far as our plans for the next year are concerned...), we will be visiting the UK but no dates or meetings are selected.

Cheers

Koos de Reus - Utrecht Morris Team"

Area Representatives (year of 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 Wales and West, Paul Reece (2017)

Southeast, Fred Hands (2018)

Area Representatives Reports

East Midlands, Charlie Corcoran

Anker Morris Men

After Covid, we have lost a couple of members due to various joint issues but have gained back members who had been on sabbatical. We also gained a member new to dancing who is doing very well and an ex-Packington dancer has recently been joining us. Toby has stepped into the role of foreman successfully and hasn't suffered too much with the 'Tony did it like this' approach.

We danced out all summer, using the new SumUp machine to great effect when collecting. Limited numbers meant we didn't get away anywhere but did manage our St George's Day tour and a surprise day for Emma's 50th.

The Feast was a great success in November, with increased numbers meaning we had to hire a bigger hall and then, on boxing day, we danced out with members of Knightlow joining us.

After many, many, many years of organising Anker, Joe Oldaker stepped down as Bagman in the autumn and Emma has stepped in to take over – completing a hatrick of Nuneaton dance teams to organise!

Anstey Morris Men

In our first season back after Covid we tended to adhere to one-spot nights. We did most Wednesdays over the Summer but far fewer weekend events that pre-covid, but which might be

due partly to numbers (i.e., we lost one guy due to not returning after the pandemic, and another has disappeared due to illness) and age (i.e. many no longer wish to camp).

We have enough regulars to dance out often, but we cannot expect to do 8-man dances. It's not looking great, if I'm honest. Some of us are worried, including me. We now have a chap with a wife with dementia. Another has recently had an operation so is currently off.

We have yet to find the illusive answer to recruitment. We had one guy say he was going to join. He came to see us a couple of times, but then didn't turn up to practice. I think we need to be really assertive and make it really clear 'we want you; we can teach you, you WILL be good enough, you will enjoy it, etc'.

We're not using a card reader yet, but it was agreed to get one at our last AGM

Darren Rushin. Bagman Anstey Morris

Bedford Morris Men

What a difference a year makes! After a gradual return to practice last winter, we ventured out to dance at one pub per month in order to ease back into performing instead of just practicing. This proved popular with audiences and Morris Men alike, after the prohibition of live entertainment during the pandemic. Mayday Morning and the May Festival were again celebrated in conjunction with Letchworth Morris. A full programme of dance-outs followed throughout the Summer with a good turnout of dancers. Two new recruits have joined the side, which is excellent news, and we also have welcomed dancers from other sides who have chosen to join Bedford. Difficulties with recruitment in recent years have seen several established sides become unviable, which is very sad. It is great that we are able to continue to perform Morris in its traditional form. Winter has come round again, and Ravensden Village Hall resounds each Wednesday evening to music, sticks and banter. Currently we retire to the Polhill Arms to rehydrate (around 10pm), as it is so local. If you fancy meeting us there for a late pint, get in touch and we'll be sure to be there. (Always a possibility that we might return to the Arms of the Wellington some time....) A busy winter programme began with the Border Tour of town pubs on the 21st of December when a generous collection was garnered. On Boxing Day, (when we were pleased to see four ex-dancers from the BMM Heritage Elite) one of the largest crowds in recent years contributed to our Bag and Cake. A donation to one or more charities will follow in the New Year. In January, we will be dancing The Abbotts Bromley Horn Dance and Border at the Dunton Wassail (7th Jan), performing the Plough Play on Plough Monday (9th Jan) pub tour of N. Beds and for a private audience at Colmworth and again in March in Ickwell. This extends the Plough Play season beyond the traditional one-off but makes better use of the time invested in rehearsal and gives more than one cast a chance to shine. We hope this brief update finds you well and more especially that we might get to see some of you throughout 2023. Best wishes and wassail!

Tim Durrant. (Squire and Fool, Bedford Morris Men.) 2022

Brackley Morris Men No report received.

Dolphin Morris Men

Dolphin's number have remained unchanged. Our 21/22 practise season was focused on a narrower range of dances from our usual range of Traditions, so we would have a core set of dances to perform well for the first dancing out season after the Covid hiatus. This worked well for us.

We arranged our normal Tour season, which went very well with none of our preferred pubs having closed. We felt that the audiences we had were glad to see us out dancing for them, as a sign of the return to normality. After experimenting with a borrowed Cashless Collection device the side took advantage of the Ring's kind offer to subsidise the purchase of our own machine. This has worked well for us, experiencing only a few connectivity issues.

Dolphin was glad to be able to attend Thaxted again (with our female musician) and later in the year had great day dancing with our friends Greensleeves Morris.

Martin Morley Bagman Dolphin Morris

First Class Stamp

First Class Stamp had an excellent year. We finally managed to get to do our stint as the invited team at Sidmouth after all the covid cancellations. We had a fantastic time dancing, running workshops, and organising the morris party. To cap it all our members won the John Gasson Jig singles competition and placed second in the doubles.

On top of this, due to a last-minute cancellation, we also ended up being the invited team at Chippenham festival – more workshops, more displays, more fun. We were joined by an extra band member – Mike on guitar – for the two festivals and Peterborough day of dance.

This practise season, we already have 3 new recruits, and we are breeding the next generation with one baby born last year and another due this.

The invites are rolling in for this year – we aim to do Saddleworth Sunday amongst other events – and we are impressed with the effort's organisers are making to accommodate an Appalachian team with a stage on morris tours.

Em Melville

Foresters Morris & Sword Dance Club

In 2022 we began to return to normal practices and dancing out during the summer. Our numbers have stayed the same: however, we are waiting for our new recruit to return after the birth of his first child.

We have held a few joint practices with the Lincoln and Micklebarrow Morris Men, and we have danced out together a few times. The highlight of the year was dancing on Boxing Day when we danced at the Bottesford Duck Race and collected around £350 for charity.

We are looking forward to dancing out a bit more during 2023.

After many years Eric Foxley has retired as Bagman.

Steve Moore Bagman

Hinckley Bullockers

The team practised as per usual during November and December and then headed out on 7th January round Sharnford, Sapcote and Stoney Stanton. We gained a couple of new members this year, and the band was spectacular as always. Toby has stepped into the role of foreman and done an outstanding job. The weather was fairly wet for the morning but stopped for the afternoon and, despite this, we had reasonable sized crowds at each pub.

Therefore, I can report that the Hinckley Bullockers are definitely thriving and next year is already planned.

Em Melville

Knightlow Morris

Knightlow have had a good year with a few of dance outs when we've had the numbers. Among them was a memorable Sunday with Chinewrde Morris at Kenilworth Castle in the summer and of course our annual jolly to Saddleworth for the Rushcart, both thoroughly enjoyable. We hope to field a few more events in the coming season, pending availability of members. As I write we are planning an open workshop in our home village of Ryton on Dunsmore on February 11th and hope to generate some more engagement with our local community through this. We are also hoping to be engaged with village events on Coronation weekend in May. As always, we welcome any opportunities to meet up with local teams so please keep those invites coming!

Cheesy, Treasurer, KMM

Leicester Morris Men

After Covid, it was always going to be difficult getting things back to a sense of normality. Previously we had practised in a carpark and danced out at a few single stops for the summer 2021. For 2022 we planned one or two stop tours with the occasional three stopper, a reduction on previous years, and were bold enough to get a Tours Leaflet printed. Our practices were usually well attended and helped to dispel the cobwebs but with Covid and particularly Omicron all men were asked to test regularly and only to attend if they had tested negative.

The Border practice sessions paid off with fine displays in our winter persona as Red Leicester at Melton Xmas Market, Leicester, The Griffin at Swithland, the Great Central Railway (albeit with red Covid masks!) Our final Border performance never happened though as the Whittlesea Straw Bear Festival was sadly cancelled.

As Covid restrictions had been reduced for the Xmas period - the Covid infection rate increased. This not only led to the cancellation of Whittlesea Straw Bear but also the Leicester Feast - again!

Cotswold practices then began, and they were usually well attended and did provide the opportunity to practice seriously once more. Besides a few recent recruits we acquired an experienced dancer who had moved into our patch, which was a boost.

All our planned Cotswold dance spots actually happened, although attendance was varied, and this made planning the repertoire difficult for the then Squire. Often some of the trickier dances had to

be left out as the personnel were not there to confidently perform them. We clocked up a grand total of 367 dances throughout the season, covering at least thirteen traditions.

Apart from our regular Wednesday tours we opened the proceedings for Leicester's St George's Day Festival, where we even involved the Lord Mayor in a dance; May Day, with our regular dancing at the top of Old John in Bradgate Park, with free beer from a local brewery, followed by a bus tour of Leicestershire spots throughout the day.

The Queen's Jubilee saw another bus tour in and around Leicester, including a visit to the street where Roy, an old member, lives, sadly no longer in the best of health and recently widowed, where the residents turned out in force, Roy brought out his melodeon and played, and gentlemen's measures of malt were brought out for the side.

Further afield we attended the Forest of Dean Festival, which we enjoyed although with low numbers and the

Potty Morris Festival, because we do like to be beside the seaside in Sheringham.

In Leicester Morris Men the Squire's tenure is for two years with an option to extend to three. Because of Covid this ended up being four years, and undoubtedly the most difficult four years in the side's seventy-year history.

So, the side is back in full swing. We were delighted to be able to a rather wet Straw Bear Festival and our Feast is back on after three years, missed by so many that we had to turn some people away. We have a new recruit but sadly two fairly recent members haven't returned. Like so many sides our average age is rather too high and many of us have creaking joints and realistically may not have many more dancing seasons left. Already one of the pub venues on our printed 2023 programme has closed down (they actually phoned us to apologise – blaming energy price hikes) and we fear it won't be the last.

So, we go into celebrating our seventieth year determined to enjoy ourselves and dance as well as we can, maintain a wide repertoire and high standards of kit and performance, whilst at the same time being concerned about the future. The side has decided that for our Jubilee year we remain an all-male side, but we recognise the inevitability of change.

Joe Krych Immediate Past Squire

Lincoln & Micklebarrow Morris Men

LMMM are still going – just! our numbers are still the same, although we have lost one member (he is 76 & says he is not as agile as he was), but have gained a new recruit, completely new to Morris, so the winter months are getting him into the groove, he seems keen enough & we are taking him to Ripley feast at the end of Jan. We are also able to call upon Matt Simons (Peterborough MM) who lives in Grantham & has helped us out on a couple of occasions.

We have done some joint gigs with Forrester's MM, both helping each other out. We have danced at a couple of Beer festivals (Nottingham & Grantham) & then danced out on May Day in Grantham. Unfortunately, having taken a few bookings for the Platinum Jubilee weekend, we had to decline them at the last minute due to sickness & not being able to field a side. We had done a few village fetes during June & July & took part in Newark traditions & Lincoln Day of Morris (both

JMO events). On plough Sunday 2023 we performed the Bassingham Plough Play in the local pubs in Navenby.

At the AGM, the item regarding election of officers was passed that they remain as they were (no one else wants to rake over the roles, although one of the Guys did say he might be interested in the Bagman's role next year) so for my sins I am still Squire, a post I have held since Lincoln Morris Men merged with Micklebarrow Morris Men over 20 years ago.

This year we have few enquiries for events & we have put our names down to go to Thaxted at the beginning of June. We are still meeting weekly at 8.30pm on a Monday night (up to the end of April) at the 7th Newark scout hut on Lovers Lane, Newark, although about once a month we have a shared practice with Forrester's MM (we either go to them or they come to us)

Our Bagman has not quite got into the 2020's so we are still asking for fees to be paid either directly by BACS or by cheque, with collections being made into a hat near the musician.

Despite Ian the Bagman not having Facebook, we are finding we are getting a lot of our enquiries through our Facebook page

Andy Horn Squire, L&MMM

Moulton Morris Men

I had the enviable record as bagman of only ever successfully booking one gig through to performance and payment over two years 2020 & 2021! I booked loads and cancelled equal loads though! Simon (Care) simoncaremusic@me.com has been bagman since I was sent to cool off and go back to being a humble fiddler.

Barry Care is still Treasurer, and we share the foreman's job between Charlie and Hayden. Jake Turner (Gareth's son) is Squire. I still do the website. I wouldn't say thriving on membership levels but we're holding together well enough to do the main annual evens and a few festivals each year. We have plenty of musicians, a core side plus enough "highdays and holidays" dancers to keep it all together for the bigger events. We lost a couple of teenagers for the usual reasons, and we have had three new recruits since the pandemic, so it's just about keeping base numbers steady. The good news is that the next generation of youngsters from the Moulton breeding program are just starting to filter in....

We use Sumup for collections and it has worked well anywhere there is signal, like the local gigs. Can be a problem at big festivals where all the stalls are also taking card payments and signal is reduced. It was a bit manic at first, because as soon as the covid restrictions on venues started to lift, we were absolutely inundated with requests to dance at pubs "tomorrow" and we hadn't practiced for 15 months! Plus, to start with, a lot of the guys were having to concentrate on getting lives and businesses back onto an even keel, so it was hard for a while to get a full side of men to commit to dates in advance. First season after covid was patchy to start with- we were having to practice outdoors for a while from summer 2021, got one or two local gigs in during the autumn, did our Boxing Day bash (big milestone) with the session in a marquee instead of the pub and then got in a few festivals and smaller gigs in 2022 including Towersey We're planning on doing a bit more this year, Evesham and Thaxted weekends are in the sights and possibly a few folk festivals in the melting pot.

We had our 50th anniversary re-union party on summer 2021, with original and far-flung members and had a great time and a banging pub session. They did a couple of mass dances and jigs along with the current crew- amazing how well some of the “old boys” played and danced! Like they’d never been away.

Hope that gives you a good picture.

Nick Ellison, Immediate past Bagman, Moulton Morris Men

Northampton Morris Men

Northampton had a fairly good year in 2022, danced out at festivals, pubs (joining other sides e.g., Braybrooke Morris and St Katharines Morris), and even danced for a large House-building company on the opening of a new housing development (well it's money in the bag so can't be too proud).

Although we have retained the name of Northampton Morris Men, we have become a mixed side and have welcomed 3 ladies into the side.

Although nothing is planned at the moment, we expect to have a busy time and are currently talking about our own day of dance in September. We have healthy numbers and can boast 4 very talented musicians.

Mick Russell New Bagman for Northampton Morris (Men).

Packington Morris Men Believed to have ceased to function.

Ripley Morris Men

It was good to be back again after the difficulties presented by Covid 19 over the last two years. At the AGM in September Alex Bowness stepped down as Squire having guided the side through the transition from Ripley Morris Men to Ripley Morris. Denise Quail became our first female Squire.

As I write this report, we have approximately 25 active dancers, characters and musicians though they rarely occupy the same space at the same time. Three longstanding members moved away from Derbyshire, and we said farewell to Jack Daws, a stalwart of the side and a very good friend to many of us. Sadly, he missed his wake which was a bloody good do.

We had a full season of practice sessions at Fritchley Church Hall, followed by a full programme of pub tours dancing out on Thursday evenings between May and September.

Over the year we met all our booking commitments. These included Crich Tramway’s Music event in July, and Ashover’s Jubilee Day in June. We maintained our tradition of dancing on Boxing Day, New Year’s Day Easter Saturday and May Day. We danced out with other sides – Penny Royal, Dolphin, Ripley Green Garters and Lady Bay Revellers and Makeney Morris. We had a side at Ripley Green Garters 40th anniversary do at Carsington in May. Our Fool attended the Fools and Beasts Unconvention in October. The bagman visited Saddleworth Rushcart. We danced at the JMO Day of Dance in Liverpool and attended the Queen’s Oak and Rose and Castle weekend in Towcester. Before Christmas we performed the Hammersmith Guisers play on three Friday evenings and raised over £1000 for the Friends of Ripley Hospital.

For the first time since 2020 the Ripley Morris Feast was held and representatives from 14 sides attended. So, 2023 finds Ripley Morris in good health. It would be nice if we could attract some new younger members over the next 12 months – hope springs eternal.

Mick Buckley Bagman Ripley Morris

Rose & Castle Morris

Rose and Castle, like so many other sides have been struggling for numbers for a few years. Lately we have had to cancel practice a few times due to insufficient numbers. To this end we held an EGM last week to vote to remove “but only males may dance the Morris” from the constitution. The clause now reads that Membership of the side is open to all. We will see what the future brings in terms of recruitment, the inclusivity may well appeal to younger men as well as women.

At the AGM held last October Geoff Emmins continued as Squire, Paul Saunders as Foreman. Ian Wellborn resigned as bagman after more years in service than was probably good for his sanity. Lis Saunders was voted in as bagman with Phil Lizius taking the role of treasurer.

The weekend of dance last summer was well attended, and a good time was had by all – despite some torrential rain during the day. Due to the attendance of “county members” and all hands-on deck we were able to put out two sets at our final dance spot that day! Plans are in place for a repeat this summer – 30th June – 2nd July if anyone wants to come just drop us an email.

Rose.castle.morris@gmail.com

Lis Saunders Rose and Castle Baguette

Towersey Morris

Towersey Morris have combined with another side and emerged as Towersey Horseshoes. They have decided to leave the Morris Ring and have joined the Morris Federation.

Pat Day

The Witchmen

No report received but from their website and having seen them at Whittlesea Straw Bear they appear to be performing well and thriving.

South Midlands, Roger Comley

Many sides have now become mixed and have grown in membership, a few have decided to hang up their Bells or Swords, other sides local to them have welcomed their members. Some members have kept contact with previous members and are making an account of their activities and achievements during their times with sides who still meet occasionally.

Wassail!

Roger, fooltothesquire@gmail.com

P.S. Still Scallop Dancing!

Northern, Darren Nugent

Barnsley Longsword

We're an all-male side dancing Longsword and Rapper. We currently have 9 dancers and 2 musicians (concertina and piccolo); one of the dancers also doubles as a musician (penny whistle) and both musicians can dance at a pinch. We haven't managed to recruit this year unfortunately but are hoping to have generated some interest on our recent Rapper tour of Barnsley.

We have a Facebook page.

Practice sessions are on alternate Tuesdays at the Barnsley Trades Club on Racecommon Road, Barnsley.

We are planning to dance at Peasmarsh with East Sussex Morris in May. Upper Denby have a day of dance in June and the Saddleworth Rushcart is in August - we hope to attend these but have not yet committed.

Regards,

Andy Cox

Great Yorkshire Morris - No report.

Green Oak Morris Men (Doncaster)

We have recruited one new member (a musician), so the side has 16 members (12 dancers, 1 dancer/musician, 3 musicians). We perform Cotswold and Yorkshire Longsword. Our musicians consist of pipe & tabor, accordion, melodeon, and recorder. We practice at 8pm, on Wednesday evenings, at the Doncaster Brewery and Tap, 7 Young Street, DN1 3EL.

Website: www.greenoakmorrismen.weebly.com, Facebook: Green Oak Morris Men

Twitter: @GreenOakMorris, Instagram: @green_oak_morris_men

Review of 2022: We did four 4 dance outs in 2022, including one to mark the Platinum Jubilee and another to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Doncaster Brewery and Tap (our home). We would like to have danced out more as 2022 was our 50th anniversary, but for various reasons we haven't been able to get a side together – some newer members haven't returned (due to work commitments or not feeling confident at dancing), and existing members have entered retirement age and are away on summer holidays. We did two performances of our traditional mummers play, one at Doncaster Brewery and Tap and the other at the Jemmy Hirst, Rawcliffe. Songs were sung, tales were told. Both events were well received.

At the AGM we elected a new Bagman and split the Squire role into 3 Commissioners. The following resolution was proposed and was passed unanimously by the side:

"In the event of no Squire being elected, the office is placed 'in commission' until the next AGM. The Board of Commissioners will comprise of three paid-up members who together, and by their majority decision, execute the office and duties of Squire"

We also proposed at the AGM to develop a recruitment plan to attract more members to the side. This was passed with a majority vote.

Plans for 2023: Recruiting new members and dancing out more will be our focus in 2023. We plan to mark His Majesty's Coronation with a dance-out.

Grimsby Morris - No report.

Handsworth Traditional Sword Dancers

We are a mixed Longsword side with a combination of melodeon, accordion, concertina, and fiddle playing for us.

In 2022 we won all categories at the 2022 SDU Longsword Competition held in Southport, taking home best traditional dance for the Handsworth Sword Dance, best own dance for our five-person longsword dance 'Medlock', best music and best overall. Women performed the full, traditional Handsworth Sword Dance for the first time, including at our traditional Boxing Day dance out. We appeared on Channel 5's 'Summer on The Farm'.

In 2023 we are booked for Sidmouth Folk Festival in August. We will be hosting the SDU Longsword Competition in Sheffield in October. We'd love as many sides as possible to attend and will be including a 'Longsword as a Second Language' category for Morris teams (etc.) who do longsword on the side, so please sign up if this is of interest!

A really successful year for the team and we continue to attract new members and get good reactions when out dancing. The team is in a strong position.

We practice on Wednesdays, 8-10pm, at Burton Street Foundation, Hillsborough, Sheffield, S6 2HH

Website address: <http://www.handsworthsworddancers.org.uk/>

Also, on: Twitter / Instagram / Facebook

Harthill Morris

Harthill Morris have 28 active members – 10 musicians, 16 dancers and an animal and a fool. Some of the musicians also have a dance or two up their sleeves for resilience. So, we are in a healthy position.

We mainly dance Cotswold.

The Morris band play violin, accordion, melodion, concertina.

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 still in the planning stages for 2023.

Cheers

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

Lord Conyers Morris Men

We are a male dancing side with 18 members – 4 musicians and 14 dancers. One dancer also plays a side drum and one who plays a base drum. We have two fiddle players, a melodeon player, and a female whistle player.

Lord Conyers Morris Men are mainly a Cotswold side but also perform our own Longsword. We practice on Wednesday evenings at The Jubilee Sports & Social Club, School Road, Wales Sheffield, S26 5QG.

Early August 2022 we managed to attend our annual pilgrimage up to Robin Hoods Bay. Blessed with fine weather, it was an extremely enjoyable weekend, great to be back without all the Covid restrictions. And in September we danced as part of the Bromley Folk Festival. We also performed our traditional Christmas Wassail & Abbots Bromley Horn Dance on Saturday 17th December. For 2023 we will perform again on May Eve and then the horn dance at dawn on May Morning. We have also accepted an invite to perform as part of The National Morris Weekend in Evesham, 23rd-25th June.

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 had no new members since January 2022. 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

We were able to perform on Boxing Day 2022 and for 2023 currently have Cleckheaton Folk Festival (30th June - 2nd July) and Boxing Day.

Cheers,

Dave Webster

Wath Morris

Wath Morris are a mixed side with 15 dancers, 3 musicians, 1 trainee (has danced), and several non-dancing members. And 6+ Morris Minors (average age 8 years).

Wath Morris are a much stronger (and younger) side than for the last few years and the future looks bright. We have a junior side, the Morris Minors, with new members regularly joining or moving on. 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, and a fiddle.

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

Website: www.wath-morris.co.uk

Facebook: Wath Morris, <https://www.facebook.com/wathmorris>.

Wath Morris Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/41239503880>

2022 was our 50th Anniversary, and the side published a booklet on the history of Wath Morris.

Plans for 2023

14-15.01.23 Instructional weekend

04.02.23 Lupercalia - day of dance, Billingley

03-05.03.23 Whitby weekend - dancing in Whitby and Robin Hoods Bay

28-30.04.23 Wath Festival

02-04.06.23 Thaxted

17.06.23 Beverley Festival (TBC)

24.06.23 Pretty Villages Tour (around South Yorkshire)

08-10.09.23 Wensleydale Weekend - Tour of the dale

Most Tuesdays during the summer - evening dance-outs (instead of practice)

The team are stronger now than any time since the 1990's. We are learning a new sword dance (Arkengarthdale) with a full team aged under 50 years.

Tim Binns, Wath Morris Bagman

Wakefield Morris

We are a mixed, North-West Morris side and are slowly building back up our numbers after the pandemic. We currently have 17 dancers, 6 of whom are aged between 10 and 13. We can muster up to 6 musicians at practice but are suffering from an ageing band with various health problems and desperately need some new blood. Instruments played include melodeons, piano accordion, trombone, drums and saxophone.

We practice on Monday evenings from 7.30 to 9.00 pm at The Kings Way Methodist Church Hall in Ossett. Once every 2 months, we will have a Sunday afternoon practice from 2.00 till 4.00 pm to try and encourage other experienced dancers and musicians to join us who might not be able to attend on Monday evenings.

Our website address is www.wakefieldmorris.com and we also have a Facebook page.

Every year, we organise the Ossett Beercart Festival which is always held on the first weekend in June. This is a combination of a Beer Festival on the Friday evening and all-day Saturday, along with a procession and day of dance in Ossett on the Saturday when as many as 20 teams from around the country have danced together. The dates for 2023 are Friday 2nd June and Saturday 3rd June. Teams staying for the weekend join us on the Sunday to dance at a local tourist spot and funds raised over the weekend are donated to Wakefield Hospice.

On Mondays in June and July, we arrange dance outs with local sides at various hostelrys and are currently signing up for a variety of dance events throughout the coming months.

Hazel Parker, Deputy Squire/Secretary

White Rose Morris - No report.

Northwest, David Loughlin

My thanks to all for the support given by Squires and Bagmen over the last year it is greatly appreciated. I wish especially a big thank you for those who supported the JMO Day of Dance in the begging of April more so those who spent some of their time as Event Marshals and without Tony Foard's time and effort it would not have been so successful. That was a very good day for all.

On that success we have been asked on behalf of the Morris Ring and in support of the Federation and Open Morris organisations to celebrating 20 years of the JMO with a Day of Dance in Chester on Saturday 23rd September 2023 pencil this date in your diaries and more information will follow.

Disappointingly there are some Sides are still struggling to survive I think partly down to the age profile at the top end of the spectrum there are a lot of retired members trying and as best as they can it still getting hard to get younger people to join. Some as you read will be aware that they are now a dancing mixed side.

Chapel-en-le-Frith

2022 started with hopes to continue but worries that the side might fold. In 2021 we lost 5 members who, for various reasons, decided not to return after Covid break. They were unable to accept any invitations because of uncertainty of numbers, but they decided to organize annual Buxton Day of Dance (even if they weren't able to perform).

They started in January with just 11 members, but only 6 regular dancers plus 2 dancer/musicians and had to take numbers in advance for practice nights in case they were too few in number. In February their non-dancing beast became adept at playing recordings of our musicians via mobile phone and Bluetooth speaker. Then in March they had 12 members they were incredibly lucky to be contacted by a young female dancer who learnt amazingly quickly. So, at the April Easter Tour they danced out for first time since Covid and first time as mixed team with 2 female members). This was a breath of fresh air to the side, so in May they danced up the Sun one Monday, In June danced 2 and cancelled 2 Morris Mondays dance outs. When July came, they had 3 Morris Monday's and Buxton Day of Dance this was one of the hottest ever and a real spirit lifter with 14 visiting sides.

When August came with 1 Morris Monday at a new venue with a fabulous participatory audience, this was the last dance out of the year but a brilliant evening

In September was a rather sombre AGM as they were still wondering what their future might hold when in October, we had a 'Give Morris a Go' evenings, which resulted in 5 new members including one experienced dancer/musician. Wow! a great success especially when in November the return to dancing of 2 of their members who had been unable to dance because of health reasons.

So finally in December the new dancers performed the 6 dances they had learnt (2 dances from 3 traditions). A good result all round.

Chester City Morris Men

Chester City Morris Men have had a successful but low-key dancing season. They were able to celebrate St George's Day and the Chester Folk Festival with other local teams, but continuing health issues limited their ability to take on other events during the year. Otherwise, numbers hold up but sadly no new members.

Kinnerton Morris Men

Kinnerton Morris Men had 3 musicians + 11 dancers for the 2022 programme. The average age of the side is now 69.6 with the majority of members now over 70 and recruitment continues mainly by word of mouth. 2022 was the first season for a novice dancer and also for an experienced man who joined immediately prior to lockdown. They are however about to lose an experienced dancer when he moves away in the Spring, and they will miss him as dancer and a very good friend.

They had a good and varied programme but due to the covid limitations in 2020 and 2021 they have used 2019 as an annual comparison as shown below. Events and dancing days were down on 2019 at 17 but very much on a par with the rest of the 2010–20 decade. After 2019 they have to go back to 2013 for a busier year than 2022. The size of the programme suited them very well. Unfortunately, a planned day tour had to be eventually cancelled but the replacement social gathering went well.

There were 12 Tuesday nights from 10 May till end of July and they danced on 7 of those plus Monday 1st August so they made use of 8 out of 12 of available pub dates.

Average dance numbers were 7 or 8 when we did dance out which was up on 2019 (7).

We managed to dance with all of the local teams but a hoped-for night with Chester City Morris Men did not materialise, but we were with them on St Georges day.

Pub Nights	8	equal
Paid Bookings	5	-1
Good Will Bookings	2	-4
Weekends	0	equal
Day of Dances	2	+1
Day Tour	0	-1
Total Events	17	-5

Comparison is with 2019

Leyland Morris Men

Leyland continued to tick over during 2022 and danced out 6 times which was probably 6 times as many as they envisaged at the start of the year with their precarious numbers. They haven't lost any numbers and been fortunate to welcome half a dozen recruits to try out Morris Dancing. Of these 4 are still with them and keen to dance out this year so they are cautiously optimistic.

So much so that they express interest in the JMO Chester Day of Dance, which is going to be this coming September, that should be a great time to meet all the Northwest Area Morris ring sides.

Manchester Morris

After the hiatus of the Covid pandemic we have nearly returned to 'business as usual' over the last year. Since the AGM (held on 4th November 2021) we held about 28 practices prior to the summer break, and a further 7 this autumn. This is more than in previous years as, due to lingering concerns over Covid, and low number of dancers, we organised only 4 Thursday dance-outs, and practiced instead on most other Thursdays until the summer break. During the year they danced out on fifteen occasions, including Knutsford May Day, Rochdale Folk Festival, Broadbottom Scarecrow

Festival and Buxton Day of Dance. They also promoted Morris Dancing by running teaching sessions for: Cottonopolis Women's Institute, cast members for "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at The Hippodrome Theatre, Todmorden, and sixth formers at Aquinas College for a display at a European student gathering. Although the number of experienced dancers has decreased since Covid, they have recruited two new members who are proving very enthusiastic and enjoying practices very much. A surprise just when this report was written, they have had another potential new dancer come along to join in and see what they do. So, with the three of them this will bring the average age of their dancers down too, a big plus,

Mersey Morris

Mersey had a very busy 2022 going from their usual New Year's Day at the Plasterers in Hoylake all the way round the Wirral, and back again to Willaston Green for Boxing Day 2023. They have danced out well over 40 times from The Royal Cheshire Show to The Clatterbridge Dog Show and John Moore's University.

They are now a mixed side with 32 members which includes a large band. During the past year an invitation went to John Kirkpatrick for him to run a musician's workshop which was a success.

North British Sword Dancers

The North British Sword Dancers have had a very strong year. As ever, they bracketed the proceedings with two practice weekends, in London and Bradford on Avon. Then went on a trip to Mons in Belgium and it turned out that the stolen melodeon had merely been misplaced by its owner, the stolen wallet was eventually returned (minus cash), and the lost phone was just that - lost.

In the spring one of their numbers got married, so they not only danced at his wedding but took the opportunity to have a grand day out in the Borough district of South London. That was followed by another foreign trip in June, this time to a sword dancing festival in Überlingen (south Germany), where they were lavishly entertained after stopping off in Stuttgart for a warm-up tour.

August saw them spend a weekend in Leeds with Black Swan Rapper and Sallyport Swords, celebrating the 30th birthday of a member of all three teams. Sadly, they were not able to raise a team for the Saddleworth Rushcart, but they did send a delegation. They did, however, manage the Sowerby Bridge Rushcart in September, where they benefited immensely from having a local man as one of their members and was able to advise on short cuts by taxi and on foot.

They have however gained two members, lost one due to ill-health, and have another whose dancing future is in the balance. One member has emigrated, but only to Germany, where they already have one exile, so hopefully they should see each other now and then. This leaves us with a dozen or so dancers, which is enough for current purposes.

They shall start 2023 with a February practice in Wigan and are working up to more foreign excursions. Not bad for an occasional side.

Royal Preston Morris Dancers

They returned to Practices in the autumn 2021 after having had three outdoor sessions and had to change their Meeting Venue as Covid was still preventing the use of the Scout Hut.

They began the Practice Season, without two stalwarts of the Team, Dave Nelson and Neil Graham who boasted 66 plus years combined service, but fortunately had a new Member and a returning Dancer from a few years ago. They also have had over the last year or so a couple of Musicians whilst they are not, as yet fully paid-up Members they have supported their Band on a number of occasions.

The Practice Season was finishing later than normal, the first of June being their initial Booking. They carried out a summer programme, completing 12 engagements, a number of their regular dates did not take place in 2022 but they enjoyed their Annual Longest Day Night Dance-Out in Croston, the Higham Scarecrow Festival, their Ribble Valley Tour, the Annual Evening of Dance with Rivington Morris and Malkin Morris and a number of local Pub Tours.

New to them was part of a summer programme at Astley Hall in Chorley following their refurbishment project and a separate Walking Tour of Chorley Town Centre.

They currently have 12 Regular Dancers and six Musicians and as ever looking to increase these numbers as and when.

Southport Swords

Southport Swords danced and helped out at the JMO in Liverpool. They also danced at Chester Folk Festival and Warwick Folk festival amongst other weekends away, including winning the games night on the Leeds Dales tour even with them trying to fix the result.

They also hosted the Sword dance Union Longsword tournament in Southport which included Speelschaar Ossart, a team from Flanders, but could not retain their titles.

Their numbers are stable at 9 dancers (in various stages of decline) and 3 musicians heading into their 55th year working on new editions to the Southport Oeuvre.

Thelwall Morris Men

The start of 2022-23 season they are celebrating their 50th Anniversary and they are organizing a Day of Dance to celebrate the occasion. They hope to get out as often as possible in the coming year to publicize themselves and get some new members. They still have a founder member still dancing with them' Geoff Bibby.

They started a recruitment campaign in late summer posting all houses in Thelwall with a leaflet advertising doom and gloom for their local team not a great success. They didn't get one no responses from residents, but they did get two additions from the accompanying news reports – one a dancer already, and another a complete novice.

The team got out to pubs and the local events during the year, but a lack of numbers and an ageing team means that they don't feel we can accept "paid bookings" in the coming season. There is some optimism that the team will make it into a 51st year, but without younger members (and several of them) beyond that it is in the balance.

Wrigley Head Morris Men

It is disappointing that Wriggley Head Morris Men are now down to about 5 fit men left - so no practices this year.

Events - They had a social gathering by the canal at Bugsworth with enough to dance but they never got kit on. A token side at Horwich, a similar turnout at Saddleworth and they danced Cromer Ring a few times with 5 or 6. There was a better turn out in full kit for the side funeral of Wendy their bag, but again no dancing and a cluster luck of an event on East Lancs Railway - cancelled on the morning but some went in kit anyway. Some of the side was spotted in kit on 4 occasions but no dancing of great note trying as they may.

So, to sum up they are goosed as they say and likely to become a processional / drinking side. But they are very keen to coach others in the mostly forgotten art of called dances and teach others the 4 dances that they do, 2 of which are about as authentic as you will find anywhere.

Duggs Carre details can be given if anyone or side wishes to take up this offer.

Northeast, Brian Pollard

Benfieldside Morris and Sword

Having escaped covid we managed to enjoy a more normal year of dancing. Regular Wednesday practices resumed morphing into Wednesday pub dance – outs during the summer which were always well received – though not always by large crowds!

May was busy with our dancing at the Richmond Mayfest, the Durham Freeman's parade in Durham marketplace and at Sedgefield Fair. Some of us supported the Durham Rams, our partners in crime, on Leeds Morris Dales Tour and at Saddleworth Rushcart.

In October we travelled to Whitchurch and enjoyed a super weekend celebrating his seventy years in the Morris with Mike Chandler.

Nearer Christmas we danced at a Christmas brass band show at the South Causey Inn and events venue managing to collect over £200 to support the Tree Tops children's ward at North Durham Hospital.

The new year began with Plough Sunday. This year we were able to process the plough into Durham Cathedral proper where the plough and the dancing was blessed by the Dean of the Cathedral who presented largesse to our youngest member, Axel, 7, who received it on behalf of the side.

Brian Pollard, Bagman

Richmond on Swale Morris Men

Following the end of COVID lockdowns, Richmond on Swale Morris Men's 2021 – 22 years almost returned to normal, with regular practice sessions to the end of May 2022 and a reasonably full summer dance programme. Of the 16 dance outs attended, 5 were invitations to local community events. The remainder were the Thursday evening pub dance outs and the annual Boxing Day tour organised by the Side. The number of active men was 14, including 3 musicians. Practice and dance out sessions were regularly well attended. Dance out numbers did reduce on occasion down to a bare 6 or even 4. The side has concentrated on its established repertoire of Bampton, Fieldtown, Bledington, Ilmington, Ducklington, Lichfield and Adderbury traditions. The dancing was generally to a fairly reasonable standard and when there was a full team our squire thought the standard of

dance rose too excellent. This 2022 -2023 practice season numbers have been increased by having an already experienced morris man join the side.

Andrew Bishop, Bagman

Redcar Sword

We only managed to field a team for two events in 2022, both in Richmond (the proper one, in North Yorkshire!). The first being at the beginning of May and the other at Richmond on Swale Morris Day of Dance later in the month. Numbers remained static until September when we welcomed a new recruit, albeit a “transfer” from another side. We were able to continue our Boxing Day tradition of performing the Greatham Sword Dance and Play at Greatham, the 56th performance, by drafting in an “old boy” and some last-minute changes due to illness. For the first time in three years, we also had the return of the post dance sing around.

Brian Pearce, Captain of Sword

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. Both sides have recently changed their gear to matching baldricks, so we look more uniform, with different badges identifying the individual sides.

A joint side practises the Rapper Dance. This is mainly the Durham Rams dance based on the revival Hamsteels dance of the 1920's. In addition, we are working on the Newbiggin Rapper dance and hope to dance this out in public soon.

This year we danced at Durham Plough Sunday with Benfieldside, which is becoming something of a tradition. We danced as part of the Durham City Freemen celebrations, and events in Richmond, 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 is also becoming a tradition.

Chris Wagstaffe, Squire.

Claro Longsword

Claro Longsword returned to practice post-pandemic in May 2022 and were delighted to dance at Thaxted in June. Raising a team thereafter was difficult with just a single performance in Knaresborough in August during their Festival of Entertainment and Visual Arts (FEVA). A return to practice in December in preparation for the January Plough Sunday services surprised us with the high standards achieved after a long break. Our plough was duly blessed at St. John's in Knaresborough on the 8th of January, and we danced during the service, the theme of which was 'sustainability' embracing both the concept of good stewardship and our 40-year tradition. We wheeled the plough through Knaresborough to the Market Cross and performed again to an appreciative audience. The following Sunday, 15th January, saw us at St. Andrew's Church in Aldborough for their Plough Sunday, sharing the dancing with Hornbeam Molly, retiring to the Crown in Borough bridge for more dancing and refreshments. We are feeling more optimistic for performing this year with the return of a younger team member and hope to dance again at Thaxted in 2023.

Monkseaton Morris Men

It's nice to be back dancing, after nearly 2 years of being unable to dance due to the pandemic, we managed to perform on 8 occasions this year.

Our first dancing opportunity was Easter Bank Holiday weekend – we performed our repertoire of dances to a large crowd at Whitley Bay seafront. We also had the pleasure of dancing with Sally Port, in April at their St George's Evening of Dance.

In May we had a lovely evening dancing at the King's Arms in Seaton Sluice with Hexham Morris Men & the Hexham Lasses.

We danced at The Cannon pub one evening in Ersden during August with 2 of our newest members dancing out for the first time.

Towards the end of the year, we did a Rapper Tour around the pubs along the Fish Quay in North Shields, collecting monetary donations for Children in Need.

In December we had the pleasure of dancing on 2 consecutive Thursday evenings at Beamish Museum Christmas Market, where we performed our Ampleforth & Mummers Play numerous times throughout each evening.

On 1st January 2023 we performed our annual (first time since January 2020 due to pandemic) New Year's Day show in Monkseaton in front of a very large crowd of around 1,200 people! After the main show we toured 6 local pubs performing our famous Rapper dance in each of them. All the time we were collecting monetary donations for Whitley Bay Food Bank.

We hope to have more opportunities to dance out and see more of you all during 2023!

Regards, Paul Nicholson (Bagman)

West Midlands, Matt Turvey

Well, I hope 2022-2023 has treated you and your sides rather better than 2021-2022! From what I can see, the majority of West Midlands sides seem to have returned back to their version of 'normal'. I hope by the time of the ARM I will have visited or will have been joined in a dance out by all West Midland sides. Understandably I have found it difficult to stray too far from home since September and the arrival of my son, but as things have begun to calm down, I will be back on jaunts anywhere between Gloucestershire and Staffordshire! Thank you to everyone who has made me welcome, shared a dance or a beer with me and shown me the best of the morris. It continues to be a pleasure being West Midlands Area Rep and I'm always striving to do the best I can to support you all – feedback continually welcome. Morris-on!

1st Sedgley Morris Men

The year has been a difficult one as 2 important stalwarts of the side have moved from the area – Bob Bailes to Tunbridge Wells & Jack Roberts to the Cotswolds.

This has brought our pool of dancers down to 11. As a result, we have been developing a repertoire of 4-man dances and this has worked fairly well so far. However, with injuries and an average age of over 70 the future looks bleak unless we recruit new members – we are doing what we can but, thus far, without success. An AGM discussion regarding the future came down strongly against

becoming a mixed side. That said we were delighted to have been joined by Vanessa O'Reilly an excellent fiddle player during the year brings our number of musicians up to 3.

We had some high spots during the year with regular events occurring again after Covid lock downs. We did also manage some "Dance Outs" with other sides, Bedcote, Jockey, White Hart & Ewell St Mary. However, our Black Country Day of Dance back in July became a super spreader Covid event with 6 people catching the dreaded virus – fortunately none was seriously ill.

Sadly, at the end of October we lost Bob Taberner – Bob had joined us from the, now defunct Giffard M.M. in 1982 and had been an active musician and dancer with the side ever since. He had been forced to give up dancing through ill-health some years ago but still played regularly and had acted as a much-valued mentor to all our current musicians. His funeral was a very Morris affair with side members Jack Cotterill acting as celebrant and David Jeffery presenting the Tribute. It was rounded off with Banbury Bill, Bampton danced inside the Chapel!

David Jeffery, Bagman

Alvechurch Morris Men

Alvechurch Morris men started the year with their traditional mummers play on New Year's Day. It was well received and with striking morris men, Liz Truss and King Charles, it was the place to be! A few wassails are coming up and planning the year's dance outs and festivals is underway. We decided to move away from Monday night dance outs in the spring to nearer the weekend, hoping to reach a bigger audience and thus attracting new members. Although some showed interest last year, we had no one turn up for new member nights. Needless to say, we still need new dancers and musicians to keep the side going. We look forward to meeting up with as many of you as we can this year, so keep dancing

Coventry Morris Men

In general terms we have had an active year getting back to normal with our usual mix of our traditional Tours (Sword in January and "Whit" on the relocated Spring Bank Holiday), community and commercial events and Tuesday summer evenings. Audiences have generally been good and appreciative after the restricted period of COVID. In terms of people, we have struggled with one of our older men dying and another having to give up because of persistent knee problems. Most of the dancing has had to been done with only 4 men although we have faced this before and have an established way of modifying the dances so that we still do something that is recognisably Cotswold or Border. The 4- and 5-man sword dances we have developed serve us well and we have the benefit of one of our wives regularly performing solo clog dances to add variety to the repertoire.

Faithful City Morris Men

We have been fortunate during 2022 having come through the Period of Pandemic (PoP) relatively unscathed. We approached our Dance Programme with due risk assessment & caution. We all had our full complement of Covid vaccinations & boosters.

An excellent start to the year meant that our first three bookings were all Beer Festivals! The main emphasis here was the (reasonable) possibility of new recruits. Three good prospects emerged from these efforts; however, one has decided family commitments must take priority but two

remain good candidates (both relocated from other Sides) and we hope this Winter's training will enable summer performances this year. We have also had one returnee to the Side after a three-year break.

Boxing Day at our local The Talbot was enjoyable and always produces a good crowd. We danced at the Three Kings Hanley Castle for St. George's Day. On May Day we danced on Worcestershire Beacon before going to Upton-upon-Severn Folk Festival. We managed one paid booking (the Jubilee Fete at Chaddesley Corbett) and were able to muster a Side on an extremely warm August lunchtime for the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Age UK Dementia Café at Barnard's Green Cricket Club then followed by a (somewhat cooler) visit to a care home in Malvern Link to dance for Mr David Chaundy, a long-standing former member of the Side.

We were able to maintain our Wednesday evening dance-outs throughout May, June & July (14 excursion altogether) together with other local Sides and the weather was extremely kind to us. The season came to a close with our usual Sunday attendance at Bromyard Folk Festival, this year also including the formal Public Proclamation of King Charles the Third.

We managed to dance all the dances on the Squire's List with Fanny Frail being the most frequent (22 times). Those dances also making it into double figures, Over the Hills, Bampton (14 times), Ring 'o Bells, Lichfield (11 times), and Old Tom of Oxford, Bampton & Upton Volunteers, Upton (10 times each), and because of the 2022 Platinum Jubilee for the Queen – Jubilee, Ilmington (9 times). In total we did 221 dances (including 5 rapper performances). 2022 was a very satisfactory year.

Flowers of Ilmington Morris

We had an enjoyable 2022, despite reduced numbers due to injury (non-morris related!) and holiday commitments. Highlights of our dancing out included:

- Ilmington Jubilee Jamboree village celebration at our headquarters the Red Lion and the next but one day at the Village Jubilee Picnic.
- Peter Shadbolt's 90th Birthday. Peter has been a member of the Traditional Ilmington Morris Men for many years and is an enthusiastic supporter of Flowers. We were honoured to dance at his very significant birthday and enjoyed the garden party which followed.
- Summer Solstice party just over the border in Mickleton
- Ilmington Show, attended by well in excess of 3000 people
- Ilmington Wassail and torchlit procession, followed by the Flowers of Ilmington Mummers Play and an extremely convivial evening of food, music and song

Finally, at our AGM in October we made the decision to 'go mixed'. This has resulted in a very welcome influx of new members, both dancers and musicians which have further swelled out numbers and will ensure us continuing to thrive throughout 2023 and beyond.

Jockey Morris

Jockey started 2022 at Alvechurch Morris Day of Dance, but things quickly took a less enjoyable turn when we had to cancel our Plough Tour due to Covid. The next time we danced as a side was in Liverpool at the JMO Day of dance, where we met friends, we hadn't seen outside Zoom for far too long. From then it was all systems go as we returned to Belgium, again getting together with much missed friends and putting on some excellent shows at the Easter Festival (Paasfeesten). We were also asked to demo a dance for a guy to try while his girlfriend recorded it. We were surprised

when we saw a compilation featuring us being seen and widely shared on Twitter and Facebook, thanks Ed People for the publicity!

That was followed by Deputy Squire Fraser's wedding (a gathering of more Jockey kits in one place than has been seen for many a day), Bedcote Morris day of dance (new member Ed's debut), Brighton Morris day of dance, dancing at the wedding of former Jockey man Dick Franks's granddaughter in Shrewsbury, Letchworth Centenary Ring Meeting, dancing at the Commonwealth Games baton relay, a tour of Birmingham on the second Saturday of the games, Saddleworth Rushcart, Bromyard Folk Festival, Peterborough day of dance and our own day of dance in October. In June, Jockey put on a workshop for children with additional needs plus their parents and carers. A very rewarding afternoon. Add in a crop of Feasts and Ales and, after a slow start, we've had an amazing 2022 and we hope 2023 follows that trend. 18 members and five associate members have been involved this year. We very much appreciate their efforts and continued support of the side.

Leominster Morris

It was great to be back to (near) normal at the start of the year with two great wassails, though boss Adam missed them both with Covid! Our new members (7) who joined after lockdown excelled in their first few events. Spring events included local pubs in Leintwardine for St George's Day and Woolhope for the Jubilee, and usual festivals The Big Apple on Mayday and Fownhope Heart of Oak at the end of May. The first of 3 away trips were to Moulton Morris' festival in mid-May where we enjoyed dancing with the hosts and other visiting sides like Saddleworth. The summer saw us head to Sidmouth Folk Festival for the first time. We had a great few days, ran 2 workshops, LNE spot, procession and even saw dolphins! Good to share spots with sides from all over including Fools Gambit and Rumworth. This was swiftly followed by Bromyard Folk Festival, which was slightly surreal due to the death of the Queen that week. Standard autumn gigs at Tenbury Wells and Much Marcle before closing the year with the mummers at Pembridge. We then had a Wassail on Friday 6th at Burton Court, Eardisland which was a huge success.

Shakespeare Morris

2022-2023 was a really enjoyable year for all in Shakespeare Morris. Things continued to get back to 'normal' and saw us perform in a variety of different locations and to enthusiastic crowds. We have held a few recruitment days and have picked up a couple of dancers as a result, one new to morris and one new to Cotswold – it's great having them both with us. We are continually looking for new members, at the time of writing this we have a recruitment day planned for the 28th of January at the Village Hall, Clifford Chambers CV37 8HR, on Monday nights 8-10pm it's the place to be!

Highlights of the year include: Shakespeare's Birthday parade in Stratford, St George's Day in Ilmington and at the Fleece Inn, Bretforton, May Day celebrations in Stratford, being joined for danceouts in Stratford by Chiltern Hundreds, Rockingham Rapper, Sussex Junction, Belles and Broomsticks and Belle D'Vain, performing in Broadway, Snowhill, Stratford, Clifford Chambers and Bidford-on-Avon for the Jubilee celebrations, celebrating 500 years of the Old Bull, Inkberrow with Aelfgythe and Appleyard, Saddleworth rushcart, Bromyard Folk Festival, Jockey's Day of Dance, Stratford Mop Fair Opening, the annual visit of Adlington Morris Men with a danceout in Newbold-on-Stour with Flowers of Ilmington, Belle D'Vain, Plum Jerkum and Bow Brook Border, Apple Day Mummers plays in Snowhill, Chipping Campden and at the Fleece Inn, Bretforton, Bidford-on-Avon

Christmas Lights Turn-on, Stratford Victorian Market, Mummers Plays in various pubs including the Fleece Inn, Bretforton on Boxing Day with a fabulous folk session and finally New Year's Day at the New Inn, Clifford Chambers. Sadly, during the course of this year, we lost two ex-Shakespeare members to Fiddler's Green, one just before the last ARM, Mike Mathew and one in more recent weeks, Bob Dickson. We will miss them both and our thoughts are with their friends and families.

Stafford Morris

2022 started in our traditional way with our Feast. But Covid was on the increase at the start of the year, so this was held virtually again. The usual ceremonials still took place, most in Morris kit and good that friends from far away were able to join. Our traditional May Day dances took place with our friends from Uttoxeter Heart of Oak Morris. Three pubs visited and a good reception at each.

The Queen's Jubilee weekend saw many activities for us in and around Stafford. The highlight was a Garden Party hosted by one of our Dancers, an amazing time had by all.

Newport Show was a staple event for Stafford Morris and again it was a resounding success. The only fly in the ointment was our Squire failed to find the stand which were giving out Pimms, which has been a tradition for us for many years. The Horn Dance was again attended by Stafford, along with friends from Uttoxeter Heart of Oak Morris and Beggar's Oak. Plus, there have been various Village Fetes and traditional pub dance outs. 2022 turned out to be quite a busy year.

Our AGM in October saw a change to some Officers. Dr Peter Copley stood down as Squire after many years' loyal service to the Club, although he will continue as Swagman. Max Haynes was elected as Squire and Max was re-elected as Foreman. Andy Chell was elected as Deputy Squire and also Bagman.

2023 is shaping up quite nicely. We already have bookings in the diary, and it is looking as though it will be another thoroughly enjoyable year of dance.

As ever, membership remains a worry. There is no possibility that Stafford could attend a majority of bookings without the help and support from friends at Uttoxeter Heart of Oak Morris. Most events have been joint events and in 2023, the decision has been made to combine bookings. This makes a lot of sense and we're looking forward to more collaboration. We have had one new Member in 2022 who is turning into a great Dancer. She attends practice regularly and is reliable at bookings. But an action for 2023 is to step up our recruitment drive. We want to look at our marketing activities and streamline our social media presence to make it more effective. The

Original Welsh Border Morris Men

It's marvellous to report that after the disruptions of the past couple of years, both the annual practice in Worcester and 2022 danceout tour showed attendances and actually more importantly atmosphere and sheer enjoyment back to pre-pandemic levels. It puts us in very good shape for our 2023 50th year celebrations. Uttoxeter Heart of Oak Morris During 2022 a total number of 31 events were considered long enough to be recorded on our bookings schedule. Of the 31 possible events: 2 were cancelled by the organisers, and we withdrew ('not attending') from 9 events (mostly potential 'paid events') due to lack of available side members. Therefore, we attended in one form or another at 20 events. Following the two/three years of covid difficulties this is a tremendous effort and marks a return to "good form" for the side. It should also be noted that

these records do not reflect the considerable support provided by Stafford Morris, or the support we supplied to many Stafford events. This mutual support is reflected in a decision made at our AGM to have a joint events programme with Stafford in 2023.

We have made an application to The Community Foundation for Staffordshire via their “We Love Uttoxeter Fund” for monetary support (up to £1000) for a project that will support recruitment.

Christmas events are planned for the 8th of December at the Uttoxeter Cracker Night, and we will be dancing and performing the Mummers Play in Uttoxeter Town Square on Boxing Day.

Our Annual Feast will be held at the end of January and invitations will go out in early 2023.

The Traditional Ilmington Morris Dancers

The side have experienced a gradual return towards a more normal year of the continuation of performing the Morris from the village during 2022.

The annual dates of St. George’s Day, May Day, Gardens Day & the Village Show were all successful – notably on Gardens Day a blue plaque dedicated to Sam Bennett, our former fiddle player, was unveiled upon his previous residence ‘The Olde Fox House’.

The ‘new’ Hobby Horse ‘Sam-son’ was introduced into the tradition this year – again on Gardens Day when he appeared with the old horse ‘Sam’, who was ‘ridden’ by our honorary member Pater Shadbolt (Peter was 90 years young this year!).

We have met with a number of other sides during the year to share our mutual interest in performing the Morris for locals and visitors to the area. The side again have instructed the village school children for a performance of ‘Shepherd’s Hey’ on the occasion of their annual May celebrations.

Over the Christmas period, members of the side were performing the village mummers Play, raising funds towards the operation of the Warwickshire & Northamptonshire Air Ambulance, which serves the Ilmington environs.

We look forward to a healthy season in 2023

Paul Bryan, Bagman, TIMD

Eastern, Matt Simons

I was appointed to the role of Area Representative for the East in May 2022, following the result of last year’s ARM which returned Nigel Strudwick as Squire-elect. Nigel had represented the eastern region since 2016, and I would like to record my personal thanks to him for the exemplary service rendered both to member clubs in the area and to the Morris Ring as a whole.

The eastern region is a large and, in many ways, disparate one, extending from the predominantly rural districts of Rutland and the Cambridgeshire fens to the bustling conurbations of north London. Though my main commitment is to Peterborough Morris, of which I am Foreman, I am also an occasional member of five other sides in the area. Equipped with a young person’s railcard and folding bicycle, over the past 15 years or so I have developed friendships with most if not quite all

of the clubs which now fall under my purview. I hope that I can continue the good work of my predecessors in serving member sides in the eastern region.

Events in 2022

The annual Thaxted Morris weekend is always a good opportunity to catch up with many sides from the east and further afield. 2022 saw the welcome return of this event after a hiatus of two years, together with a few revisions to the familiar format. Of the thirteen sides in attendance, four were Morris Ring sides from the eastern area: Devil's Dyke, East Suffolk, Peterborough, and of course Thaxted. Though not members of the Morris Ring, Chelmsford Morris deserve an honourable mention. I'm sure that everyone in attendance will remember fondly how the Chelmsford Ladies (northwest) opened the massed show to rapturous applause.

On the weekend of 17th–19th June, the Kemp's Men of Norwich hosted the Utrecht Morris Team (NL), marking the culmination of a friendship which began through 'Zoom' meetings during lockdown. Saturday was spent in touring Norwich, joined by five other sides and a one-off guest appearance by Big Jigs, following some necessary costume changes (see photo). Morris Ring sides in attendance were Devil's Dyke, East Suffolk, Golden Star (associate), and Peterborough.

Five sides from the east also sent representatives to the Letchworth centenary meeting in July, based at the Shuttleworth College and Collection near Biggleswade. In addition to full sides from Devil's Dyke and Thaxted, were individuals from Cambridge, Kemp's, and Peterborough.

Another annual meeting of morris sides, which has been growing in popularity in recent years, is the Peterborough Morris Day of Dance in late September. In 2022, the event attracted more than 100 dancers and musicians, including representatives from a total of nine Morris Ring member sides, of which four belonged to the eastern area: Cambridge, Peterborough, Rutland, and Thaxted.

Youth Workshop

During Mike Stevens' tenure as Eastern Area Rep. (2010–2016), a series of successful workshops took place for younger dancers in the region to meet together and experiment with new dances. It is pleasing to see that many alumni of the so-called 'Greater Anglia Youth Morris' are now beginning to take leadership roles in their own sides. Contrary to the accusations of detractors at the time, who perceived the workshops as a challenge to sides' identities, surely this is proof that initiatives such as these are in the long-term interests of clubs and morris as a whole.

On the afternoon of Saturday, 26th November, seven young dancers met together in a small village hall near Thaxted for a workshop in Cotswold morris. The stated objective of the session was to use traditions unfamiliar to most — namely, Bidford and Longborough — as an exercise in practising how to dance as a set, working together as a team. Of the participants, three were from Thaxted, one was from Jockey, and one was from Golden Star (and Morris Federation sides, King's and Rumburgh). Ages varied from mid-teens to mid-20s. My brother, Ollie Simons of Peterborough, led the session, and I was pleased to provide the music and the occasional comment. Later that evening at the Thaxted Morris Ale, we were able to give a display to the assembled company. The workshop was supported by a grant from the Morris Ring Youth Fund.

Business as usual?

The following section is the distillation of responses to a short questionnaire, which I distributed to all member and associate sides in the eastern region. Of the twenty clubs, comprising thirteen full members and seven associates, all but one replied — a very pleasing return. I was particularly keen to measure the extent to which the various effects of Covid-19 continue to be felt by sides across the area, and whether the pandemic proved a watershed or merely an interruption in their activities.

The vast majority of sides have now returned to 'business as usual', with levels of activity comparable to those before the pandemic. For the majority of those which reported a fall in the number of meetings and events, this was attributed to long-term trends of slow but steady decline. The legacy of the pandemic, together with the attendant measures put in place to reduce transmission during 2020 and 2021, appears not to have precipitated any significant material change in the way that sides carry out their regular activities. Though two sides mentioned that some of their members remain wary of contracting the virus, these concerns have been addressed by continuing to ensure appropriate ventilation in practice venues.

For many sides, the relatively quick return to 'business as usual' was driven by a renewed enthusiasm for dancing. In the words of Joni Mitchell, "you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone". The events of 2020/21 brought into sharp focus how many of us take for granted such things as morris dancing and a pint at the pub. Though I was initially concerned that the pandemic may have accelerated existing decline, for many sides it actually appears to have given rise to renewed energy and ardour.

However, there are still challenges, both old and new, which we must continue to confront. One side reported a concern that the worsening economic climate is likely to have a deleterious effect on their younger members, as shrinking levels of disposable income are likely to restrict their ability to participate so readily. Another challenge common to several sides across the area, has been in finding suitable venues for weekday evening shows in summer. Since reopening, many pubs have reduced their opening hours in response to declining footfall, and some have even closed their doors for good.

Membership and Recruitment

Membership levels and success in recruitment are very mixed across the region. Looking back over the past three years, five sides reported an increase in membership, eight described the situation as steady, and six have seen slow decline.

The most common reason given for declining membership is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the effects of ageing and infirmity. Even for a couple of sides which have had some success in recruiting newcomers, they comment that this has not sufficiently compensated for the loss of experienced and committed members. Perhaps with more time and practice, these novices will help turn these clubs around.

There are, however, reasons for optimism. Golden Star Morris (Norwich) have a membership of 45, of which 35 are regularly active and 9 have joined in the past two years. Crendon Morris (west Buckinghamshire) gained 6 new members over the past year, and a successful campaign by Devil's Dyke (south Cambridgeshire) recently yielded 3 newcomers and a possible fourth.

In October, Rutland Morris Men hosted a public workshop in partnership with Peterborough Morris, which attracted seven novices. Despite a good turnout and positive feedback, the event has so far only yielded one new member (to Rutland).

Of the nineteen sides which responded, fifteen are men-only (though several have women musicians) and four are mixed. Of the four mixed sides, two of these were until relatively recently men's sides. One of these, London Pride, also recently merged with Sharp Morris (Morris Federation), a mixed side which emerged out of the weekly morris classes run by the English Folk Dance and Song Society at Cecil Sharp House. At the time of writing, another side is contemplating opening their membership to all following several enquiries from women.

Relationships with other sides

Nearly all sides in the eastern area were keen to report that they enjoy cordial relationships with their neighbouring clubs, irrespective of whether or not they are also members of the Morris Ring. The majority of sides appear to be actively fostering good relations with neighbour clubs, manifest in joint pub nights and tours. Many sides also reported that they have members who belong to other sides, though only in one instance was there any allusion to tensions arising out of 'divided loyalties'.

Morale

Even sides which are struggling with recruitment and the effects of ageing memberships are generally happy and upbeat. A couple of clubs are facing likely dissolution with stoicism. To quote one such example, 'we plod on doing our stuff. We enjoy what we do, but are very aware that it is running down.' However, the prevailing mood across sides in the east is one of positivity.

Matt Simons, Eastern Area Representative

January 2023



Photo: Big Jigs dancing in front of Norwich City Hall, overlooking the market, at a Day of Dance hosted by Kemp's Men of Norwich, on Saturday, 18th June 2022. Supplied by Steve Hickling.

South Wales and West, Paul Reece

Despite the loss of Mendip to the Federation the great majority of sides are reporting a considerable upturn of interest post Covid. Recruitment is up, spirits are up, and demand largely exceeds what sides are able to provide as a practically yearlong activity in one form or another, be it Morris, Mumming and Wassail. Sides have had to diversify to survive and often reinvent themselves and become more open to different approaches in order to recruit. The future overall looks encouraging.

Bathampton MM

No report received.

Bovey Tracey Mummers

Activity and demand following Covid has not yet returned to pre Covid levels.

Bristol MM

Are still hanging in and positive about the future, although age and numbers, currently 7 dancers and 2 musicians, and the ability to recruit is of some concern.

Cam Valley MM

Continue to be enthusiastic about their dancing and remain in demand noticeably at the annual Bath & Wells Show.

Chalice MM

Experienced a great return to summer dancing which was much appreciated by the public and reinforced by good weather that kept spirits high and resulted in 4 weekend events.

Dartington Morris

We have benefited from the switch to a mixed side last year resulting in 6 new dancers, 5 of whom are women, and a new musician. Musicians range from 5 to 6. Last summer was a great improvement on the previous one with 3 new dancers joining at the start of the year resulting in a really good year. The rest of the later recruits have boosted our winter programme and collectively they have all added to the general energy of the side. We are looking forward to a busy summer commencing with the King John D of D in April.

Exeter Morris

The decision to go mixed went viral in the media resulting in 10 new recruits, 7 female, 2 male dancers and 1 musician, followed by more women from the taster sessions, have turned things around.

Gloucestershire Morris

A move into Gloucester for practices and the unanimous decision to invite women has improved numbers that had dwindled to as low as 3 for practices just over a year ago. Losses to the side included former Squires Tony Poulter and Gwilym Davies, a posthumous EFDSS gold badge recipient, former Foreman Harry Cowan and Lionel Parkhouse. 3 ladies, 2 men and a past member

have recently joined the side, a coordinating foreman and several long serving dancers assist with Oddington, Bledington and Sherborne traditions. After a very hard journey we are now positively building for the future.

Helier Morris

No report received

Lyme Morris

A very successful year with 10 sides attending our Day of Morris. We have now opened our side to female dancers as a result of holding taster sessions. Our main issue is attracting local musicians to play for us.

North Curry Mummers

No report received

Plymouth Morris

Greatly in demand throughout the year with a very full programme that included Chippenham and Letchworth meetings last year and King John and Helmond weekends this year. We have 4 new recruits including dancers from NW and Border traditions who want to learn Cotswold. Number of dancers is strong which means that we can on occasions put out 2 sides for Cotswold and multiple sides for our Plymouth tradition. However, availability of musicians can be problematic at times, so we are looking for and receiving musicians to reinforce this essential area.

Sweyns Ey

Our busiest year having attended public events every month of the year including 10 gigs in May and the Chippenham, Gower and Green Man festivals, the latter attracting a positive review of the side in The Times, and we have attracted 5 new recruits.

Taunton Deane MM

A successful year taking on more events and tours including the Bridport Festival in our Cotswold season and Wassails, Taunton Tour and New Year's Day for our Border season. Currently we have 15 dancers and 5 musicians.

Trigg Morris

Enjoyed a full year including attending the Isle of Wight weekend tour. Although down one dancer temporarily because of a pregnancy, yes our average age has dropped significantly through 2 excellent young female dancers. Numbers are reasonably sound with potentially 2 new recruits, but we could do with additional musicians to allow the Foreman and Squire elect to dance.

West Somerset Morris

We are thriving, having 2 sides up to dance at practices and receiving younger new recruits. Our summer programme is pretty full, and we will be attending the Exeter JMO and Wessex Folk Festival.

Wyvern Jubilee Morris

We celebrated our 45th anniversary on Jubilee Sunday culminating at the place where we first danced out in 1977. With active dancers down to 8 Wyvern has made the decision to open practices to all, and will from now on will be a mixed side.

South East, Fred Hands

I am trying to write this report whilst trying to pack up my house for a move to the Carlisle area of Cumbria, it seems that the last year has been difficult for many clubs with regard to getting back on their feet following lockdown and covid. Thankfully not too many men succumbed to covid although there have been a few cases. It is noticeable from what I am told by bagmen that some clubs are struggling to recruit and maintain sufficient numbers to dance regularly, recruiting new member has been difficult for the majority of clubs. Wadard Morris have sadly closed due to insufficient Members. Woodchurch also tell a similar story with no recruits and the side getting older it is only time.

Thames Valley have moved back to Claygate where they were first formed, in the hope of improving their chances of recruitment. They have also voted to admit women and leafleted the change on Boxing Day in an attempt to recruit. As they say, only time will tell. They tell me that they only have 11 regular members including non-dancing musicians. A further 10 turn out occasionally. However, the majority of the side are now over 70 years of age. They did celebrate their 70th anniversary with a day of dance and a feast at the Claygate flower show which is how it all started.

King John's are in a similar situation overall, a paucity of numbers resulting from illness, injury and moves away for various reasons has affected their ability to do all that they would have wished. Having said that, they managed to dance at many of our favourite venues during the year, plus several fetes and the New Forest Folk Festival, where they not only provided the opening entertainment but ran morris workshops on three days. Also, after having a virtual mumming event for the last 2 years, they were out again in various carefully selected venue in and around Southampton, and, together with the collection at our Boxing Day dance out, raised in excess of £1200 for charity. As for recruiting In the Autumn's practice season we enticed a former member back into the fold and he has brought a friend who shows promise; we just need more. Winchester have had more success with recruiting over recent months with 2 transfers in from other sides one complete novice and one established dancer's son, so numbers are up slightly.

The majority of the other sides in the area have not managed to recruit in any substantial numbers despite many sides making a concerted effort to tempt newcomers. I note that in the past clubs would hold an open practice night at the start of the practice season to encourage newcomers this has been expanded in to cover all of October in some cases. Hartley picked up a new member when Headcorn Morris from Kent closed down and he has stayed with the side. It seems that for each man recruited one either leaves, dies or moves away so active members are reducing slowly

The other reason of course that clubs are suffering from a loss of members is that many are becoming less mobile as sides have more older members, unfortunately age and infirmity are also taking their toll and members retiring to other parts of the country, myself included.

Hartley, Victory and Ewell St Mary all have over 20 members on their books, some of course are regional members who don't live close to where their club perform regularly but again getting members out to dance is not always easy, at any time. Hartley have adopted the use of a mobile phone app Called SPOND designed for sports clubs which allows all members to state weather or not they are available for the next outing. If numbers are too low the event can be cancelled, it is particularly good for practice nights

The regular weekly summer evening tours have changed in some places and not in others. Some have said that they have seen little, or no change others have found the entire pub scene has changed and there are a lot less pubs to choose from, and many more are food orientated rather than traditional pubs. A number of clubs have modified evening tours reducing two stands an evening down to one otherwise clubs are going out less often fortnightly rather than weekly

On a brighter note a number of clubs have either celebrated significant anniversaries or are due to within a year or so. Chactonbury Ring celebrate 70 years in 2023. Victory celebrates their 50th very soon and are also planning their annual day of Dance. Broadwood are also celebrating 50 Years and they're planning their annual day of dance. Greensleeves have cut down on their weekly tours but have concentrated on bigger events like the Lord Mayor's show and other larger events. East Surrey tell me that they haven't managed to recruit but managed a full summer programme on Monday nights with reasonable support, but weekend events were not as well supported. That said, they ran a reduced but successful Rye weekend and are staggering towards their centenary in 2026 Ashdown Forrest are also celebrating 50 Years Men of Wight had a delayed 50th anniversary celebration and The Word famous Ashdown mummers performed their mummers play for the 50th year

The only other comment I have heard is concerning the card reading device for cashless payments, which I hear depends on getting a good signal so better at larger events but not so good at a remote country pub.

Morris Ring Publications

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On-line Links:



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

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

Contact the Morris Ring Bagman to register to use.

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

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

Call for Contributions

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

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

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

the MORRIS RING
founded 1934