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## Papers for ARM

1<sup>st</sup> February 2025

**PLEASE NOTE: THIS PACK IS INCOMPLETE AND WILL BE UPDATED  
BEFORE THE ARM AS MISSING REPORTS ARE MADE AVAILABLE**

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## **Agenda for the 2025 Morris Ring Annual Representatives' Meeting**

1. Attendees and apologies
2. Minutes of the 2024 meeting (**see pages 3 to 7**)  
([https://themorrisring.org/files/docs/bagmans-newsletter/bagmans-newsletter-january-2025\\_1.pdf](https://themorrisring.org/files/docs/bagmans-newsletter/bagmans-newsletter-january-2025_1.pdf))
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Officers' reports:
  - a. Squire of the Morris Ring
  - b. Bagman of the Morris Ring
  - c. Treasurer of the Morris Ring
  - d. Chairman of the Advisory Council
  - e. Morris Ring Archive Group
  - f. Webmaster and publications
  - g. Overseas Bagman
    - i. Lewis Elliot has volunteered his services in this role, unless any other candidates present themselves it is the assumption that he will be co-opted to the role
5. Election of Bagman (**see page 19**)
6. Proposed changes to supporting documents to the constitution (**see page 23**)
7. Nominations of teams for Full membership
  - a. Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts
8. Area Representatives' Reports
9. Future events
10. Date of next meeting (assuming no issues likely to be March 7<sup>th</sup>)
11. Any other business

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

## Minutes of the 2024 Morris Ring Annual Representatives' Meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2024

The meeting opened with the Squire welcoming representatives from the other JMO members. Nigel remarked it was a very attended meeting.

### 12. Attendees and apologies

Sides represented:

Anker	Golden Star	Ripley
Benfieldside	Green Man	Royal Preston
Big Jigs	Handsworth	Rutland
Bristol	Harthill	Saddleworth Men
Bury Pace-Eggers	Hinkley Bullockers	Saddleworth Women
Cambridge	Traditional Ilmington	Shakespeare
Chanctonbury Ring	Jockey	Stafford
Chester City	Kemp's Men	Taylor's Morris
Colchester	Kennet	Thaxted
Dartington	Kingston Spring Grove	Thelwall
Devil's Dyke	Knightlow	Traditional Bampton
Dolphin	Lassington Oak	Trigg
Earlsdon	Leicester	Uttoxeter
East Suffolk	Letchworth	Wath-upon-Dearne
East Surrey	Lord Conyers	Whitchurch
Exeter	Mersey	White Hart
First Class Stamp	Morris 18-30	Winchester
Flowers of Ilmington	Moulton	Yateley
Fools and Beasts	Original Welsh Border	
Gloucestershire	Plymouth	

Plus, Jen Cox, Liz Scholey (Open Morris), Pauline Woods-Wilson, Eliza Russell (Morris Federation) and Fee Lock (JMO Secretary), Tim Sercombe (past Squire), Adam Garland (past Squire)

Apologies from Ashdown Forest, King Johns, Lincoln and Micklebarrow, Earlsdon, Green Oak, Leyland

Also, Cliff Marchant (past squire) and Mike Chandler (past squire)

### 13. Minutes of the 2023 meeting available on the Morris Ring website

<https://themorrisring.org/sites/default/files/docs/bagnews/arm-minutes-5-march-2022.pdf>

### 14. Matters arising from the minutes

No matters arising

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

#### a. Squire of the Morris Ring

- Nigel added that since his report was submitted he's presented Lord Redesdale with a photograph of the JMO London event, very gratefully received
- Michael Stimpson is standing down as the JMO's insurance broker. Chris Dent of Peterborough is going to shadow and eventually take over in due course

- Peter Copley, Stafford – do members need to need to pay subs to be insured?  
Pauline confirmed that if a person is declared a member of a side, they are covered.

Accepted, proposed Peter Copley, seconded Charlie Corcoran

b. Bagman of the Morris Ring

- i. Peter Austin declared to the meeting his intention to stand down next year, after 2 terms and a change in circumstances it was time to step back

Accepted, proposed Jono Millward, seconded Steve Holder

c. Treasurer of the Morris Ring

*The Treasurer presented a summary of the accounts –*

*Accounts have not been audited yet*

*£4200 refunded to sides to card readers*

*£1000 to Doc Rowe documentary fundraiser*

- i. Question re reserves from Mersey

*Sarah Roberts – on behalf of Andy Wooles*

*What is the MR policy on cash reserves? Cash reserves are normally held to meet the short term and emergency funding needs of an organisation. The current MR cash reserves of £62k appear excessive for that purposes, and perhaps some could be used to fund specific Morris development projects?*

*Clayton – No policy as such, reserves kept, and prior treasurers have maintained the reserves for harder times. Not much call for funding. Ideas have not been forthcoming. Looking into setting up grants. 3 levels, up to £1000, £1-3000, and £5000.*

*Money has to be for projects above and beyond the day to day running of sides. No more than £10000 given out in any given year.*

*Charlie Corcoran – loans made available for rebranding; would this be an option? Has funding a new production run of bells been considered?*

*Clayton – Morris Shop, sizeable stock of bells available but not currently accessible*

*Nigel S – we are working to resolve the shop*

*Nigel Cox, Whitchurch – back to grants, any chance of loans? Need help funding baldric material run. £1500 needed for Whitchurch.*

*Clayton – separate conversation to be had*

*PdC, Kennet – less availability for sides of baldric material.*

*Robin Springett, Dartington, Past Squire – are we going to develop the idea of grants further, guidelines needed before any further information available. Other things done in the past on similar lines.*

*Clayton – initial thoughts only, further*

Accepted, proposed Steven Archer, seconded Jon Melville

- d. Chairman of the Advisory Council  
*Nothing to add*  
Accepted, proposed Colin Andrew, seconded, Matthew Turvey
  
- e. Morris Ring Archive Group  
*Nigel S – Duncan Broomhead stepping down, very grateful for his work as keeper of the photographic archive. New volunteer needed to manage photographic archive; plan is to submit it to Essex County Records office to join the rest of the archive.*  
  
*Chris Wildridge – Duncan is irreplaceable*  
  
Accepted, propose Robin Springett, seconded, John Edwards
  
- f. Webmaster and publications  
*PdC – nothing to add, happy to carry on as web editor*  
  
*Matt Simons, Cambridge, Editor of The Morris Dancer – took over TMD from Mac McCoig, unfortunately personal circumstances mean I must stand down, anyone who'd like to take it over please get in touch*  
  
*Peter Austin – thanks to Martin Jones for his continuing work in hosting/running the website*
  
- g. Overseas Bagman  
*See report – nothing to add*

## 16. Elections

- a. Squire election  
*Final count*  
  
*Emma Melville - 44*  
  
*Clayton Francis - 28*  
  
*Congratulations to Emma, office to be taken up next year*  
  
*Postscript – current Ring membership has 138 Full member sides with voting rights, putting turnout at 52.17%, 37 votes were by proxy*

## 17. Full membership nominations

*Nigel noted 2 new associate sides have joined recently, Saddleworth Women's Morris and Bald ol' Guvenors. Welcome both.*

- a. Golden Star
  - i. Accepted by majority show of hands
- b. Flowers of Ilmington  
*Pete Simpson spoke on behalf of Flowers; they are a good local side of the type the Ring should consider an asset*
  - i. Accepted by majority show of hands

**18. Area Representatives** (year of election in brackets)

East Midlands, Charlie Corcoran (2019)

*Nothing to add*

South Midlands, Roger Comley (2003), replaced by Geoff Pitt

*21 years as area rep*

*Headington Quarry – celebrating the life of John Graham who passed away last year, 17<sup>th</sup> March will be a memorial service for him*

*Whitchurch – went for a weekend in Norfolk in Letchworth, to be repeated*

*Scallop dance will be presented later – at this point there was a general outbreak of good-natured groaning*

Northern, Darren Nugent (2021)

*4 sides present, 2 sides mentioned TRS*

*Archive – fascinating discussion had, would be nice if archival policy/guidance/template from the Ring was available*

*NS – Archive group to produce some guidance*

Northwest, David Loughlin (2008)

*Nothing to add*

Northeast, Brian Pollard (1994) replaced by Nick Appleyard

*Nothing to add*

West Midlands, Matthew Turvey (Shakespeare) (2021)

*Nothing to add*

Eastern, Matt Simons (Peterborough) (2023)

*Archives – plans and activities discussed; Cambridge archive currently being catalogued at Ely. Archivist has been cataloguing since September, aim for online access after Easter. Rutland archive about to be deposited at Leicester and Rutland Archive in Wigston*

South East, Lewis Elliot (Westminster, Greensleeves et al) (2023)

*Question marks over proxy vote process, abstention as an option would be nice*

South Wales and West, Paul Reece (2017)

*What we should archive was discussed.*

Ratified by the areas.

19. 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

20. Future events

- 13th Apr      Joint Morris Organisations' Day of Dance 2024 (Newark)
- 27th Apr      Cambridge Morris Men, Centenary Spring Day of Dance (Ring Meeting 368)
- 31<sup>st</sup> May - 2<sup>nd</sup> Jun      Thaxted Annual Weekend of Dance
- 10th Aug      Stratford-upon-Avon Day of Dance (Provisional Ring Meeting 369)
- 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> Aug Saddleworth Rushcart (Provisional Ring Meeting 370)
- 28th Sept      Peterborough Morris Day of Dance (Provisional Ring Meeting 371)
- 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Oct      Fools and Beasts Unconvention, Birmingham

21. Any other business

- a. *Question re full voting rights for joint members from Order of Fools and Beasts*
  - i. *Discussion to be had on if and how it can be changed*
- b. *Colin Andrews, Morris Dance Database – available for questions today if anyone has them*
- c. *Robin Springett – 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ring, centenary celebrations should start to be thought about now.*  
*Barry Care – I organised the 50<sup>th</sup> and I'm still recovering*  
*Nigel S – We'll mark the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary throughout the year at the events highlighted*
- d. *Joe Oldaker, Anker – Heart of England Longsword practice set available to a good home – immediately claimed by Wath Morris*

22. Date of next meeting

*March 1<sup>st</sup> 2025*

Meeting closed at 15:27

## **Squire's Report for ARM 2025**

My report last year said that my first year was much about settling in. Certainly, this year I felt more comfortable, and it has been a busy year. So now that I approach the exit door, this is effectively a summary of my whole term as Squire.

You will be relieved that I will not be listing the events I have attended, as my musings in the Newsletters and via the Bagman network have dealt with those, with the exception of the post-New Year period. The Jockey Plough Tour was one of the coldest days on which I have ever danced, but the sun came out and gave us an excellent day. The Stafford Feast that same evening was also excellent, and congratulations to the side for producing the super meal. Ripley Ale Feast, with 110 attendees, with another great repast, was splendid, and I still have Winchester and Kennet to go!

### **Ring Meetings**

There have been five during my tenure, all very enjoyable, and I would like to encourage all sides to think of doing one. There was just the one in 2023 (Rushcart), but we also had the events up and down the country organised in the name of the JMO to mark 20 years since the exemption from the Licensing Act 2003 was obtained.

The evolution of the Ring Meeting has continued, and in fact none of these five has been the “traditional” one of a weekend based at an appropriate building, with coach tours, feasts etc. The Rushcart is a weekend meeting in a category of its own, and Saddleworth MM have a huge amount to organise without worrying about buses, accommodation and catering—and they succeed admirably. Day meetings are becoming almost the norm now, and formats ever more flexible, and this does have to be put down to the ever more complex and expensive logistics of organising accommodation, catering, transport etc for a three-day event. Basically, if you want to organise a Ring Meeting, contact the Officers to discuss your ideas as soon as possible and they will do their utmost to help. We have one meeting so far on the list for 2025 (Anker 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary) and more would be very welcome.

While not a Ring Meeting, we did also have the gathering in October to mark the Ring's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, complemented by the series of quarter peals rung in various churches around the country, organised expertly by Matthew Turvey (more on both of these in the previous Newsletter).

### **Shop**

The Treasurer will be reporting more on the status of the Morris Shop. We have made some progress, but not quite as much as we would have liked. We very much want to make it possible for the Ring to supply members with two basic items, bells and Black Books, but the exact manner in which that will take place will be the responsibility of the Officers in place after the ARM.

### **Area Reps**

Our Area Reps truly are the local eyes and ears of the Ring, and they are frequently in the position to pass on to the Officers information that has come to their attention. They also know “their” sides well, and they keep in touch either through electronic means or actually by going out and visiting (or both), although paying visits is easier in some parts of the country than others. The concept of local newsletters has come on with leaps and bounds, and at present we have those from the West Midlands, South Midlands and North areas—thanks to Matthew, Geoff and Darren for all their



efforts—and I have no doubt that others will appear before long; so much depends on the free time available to the Area Reps, and all are different.

### **The JMO**

2024 was a fairly quiet year for the JMO, especially after 2023 and the events to celebrate 20 years since the gaining of the exemption from the Licensing Act 2023. The JMO is in the process of revising its constitution, which it is hoped will be passed at its annual meeting in February. Another thing on which the JMO is working is identifying new suppliers for bells—something that, like insurance, is best provided by the efforts of the three organisations working together. This is still work in progress.

The 2025 JMO Day of Dance is being organised on behalf of the Morris Ring by Adlington MM in Stockport and will take place on 26 April. The last count of teams going numbered 56 across all three organisations, including 14 from the Ring. Adlington have been doing a splendid job organising it, and they have additionally had the full support and more of Stockport Council and it is a delight to see a local authority giving such support to an event like this. The Ring is very grateful to Adlington for taking on this arduous task.

### **Archives**

I understand the importance of archives from my professional background in Egyptology, and I have done my best to take as active an interest in the Morris Ring Archive Group (MRAG) as time permits. The MRAG Chairman, Chris Wildridge, has worked overseeing the MRAG and for making progress towards making the Ring Archive available on the Internet via its home in the Essex Record Office (ERO). At present, the documents in the ERO are being verified via a project led by Geoff Douglas—we can hope that it will not be too long more before they are available online.

Still on the MRAG, in the course of 2024, Duncan Broomhead indicated that this year or next he will relinquish the role of Keeper of the Photographic Archive which he has fulfilled for a very long time. I wish to offer him the Ring's profound thanks for his work and vast accumulated knowledge; we are deeply in his debt. His knowledge is irreplaceable, but we can hope that as the Photographic Archive moves to the ERO, his work will become accessible to all.

Lastly, at all ARMs, I have stressed the importance of clubs ensuring that their archives are preserved and not consigned to a skip by some well-meaning individual. The overarching advice we offer is that the best place for such archives is the club's local Public Record Office—each administrative area of the UK has to have one by law and they give the best chance of survival for the material. As a prime example of such preservation, the massive Cambridge MM archive overseen for many years by John Jenner has been recently transferred to the Cambridgeshire Archives and their future is assured.

A word on the importance of archives. While a club may feel whatever archive material it has is not important to anyone else, the fact is that no-one knows what information might be sought by researchers of all types in the future. Surely the writers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Churchwardens' accounts could not have foreseen that Michael Heaney would be writing about them in 2022...

## Reflections

When individuals put themselves up for election for Ring offices, it is not the one thing to write anything remotely approaching a manifesto. Nonetheless, there are some things I wanted to achieve in my two years. One of them was improving communications with member sides since the Ring exists to serve them. This I tried to do in a couple of ways, the first of which was ensuring that I kept the membership informed as to what has been going on. In addition to the regular Newsletters, some things were sent directly to Bagmen so that the information could be sent between the Newsletters. I hope this has been appreciated. The other way was trying to get out and see as many sides as I could. This is something that has always been part of the expectations of a SOTMR, although I am not sure I attended quite as many feasts, DoDs etc as some of my predecessors. I have been made to feel very welcome wherever I went, and it means a lot to me to feel that the membership appreciated my presence, no doubt as I was showing interest in their side and what they do. I was certainly the first SOTMR to have attended a couple of them, and they were all a huge amount of fun in their very different ways. I have talked often about friendship and fellowship being at the core of the Morris, and the Ring in particular, and I have seen this so many times in the course of the two years.

Another thing I hoped to do was to work on Associate sides to encourage them to apply for Full Membership, which can take a time as proposals for Full Membership have to go to an ARM. I knew from my time as Eastern Area Rep that some sides, particularly occasional ones, are happy to stay as Associates for whatever reason. This I accept, even if it was not part of the original concept of the Associate. My cycle accident in 2023 rather sidetracked me from concentrating on raising this issue with other Associates in good time and I regret this. Nonetheless, I have admitted three sides over the last two years, Big Jigs, Flowers of Ilmington and Golden Star. In these days when a lot of people seem to be wary of some of the traditions of the Morris Ring, it was a delight to see both the effort they all made to make their dancing-in performance special, and also the genuine pleasure on the members' faces when they got their hands on their Ring staff! As a result, we have now run out of new staffs for the moment, but I can be sure that Bagman Peter is on the case and will work with his successor to source more, as I have every hope that it will not be long before our most recent Associates, Saddleworth Women's Morris & Clog, will be applying for Full Membership given the ability they have already shown and their rapidly expanding membership. When we were getting this year's staffs out, we made the interesting discovery of the Wargrave staff from 1934, about which I wrote in a Newsletter last year.

In general, I think the Ring is still settling down from the constitutional changes in 2018, not forgetting the revisions of 2022, and it would be inappropriate to consider more changes just yet, but rather ensure the structures we have created work well, and I feel they have—which is a great compliment to Simon's Constitutional Commission that spent a lot of time producing the 2022 document. We have a straightforward and clear Constitution, with a set of supporting documents, some of which need minor revisions.

The Ring has certainly changed a lot since 2018, and I am very happy with how we have adapted to the new situation and am confident that we will be in a good position to celebrate our centenary in 2034. Over the coming years it will surely be necessary to conduct a review where the Ring is going, but that will be for my successor and her successors to do! One just has to look at Days of Dance

and the Morris Census to see how the whole Morris world is changing, with newer forms of dance and attempts to widen participation. I detect, notably in the media which has so long seemed to denigrate what we do, a change in the air and greater positivity all round, and perhaps even a greater appreciation of our national dance forms. However, the biggest problem still facing everyone, regardless of gender or organisation, is the demographic of the Morris world and the need to get younger people of all backgrounds involved, to ensure that the tradition that was so meticulously reconstructed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century continues well into the future.

### **Thanks**

There are so many people I have to thank for making my two years the interesting and enjoyable time it has been. I am bound to miss someone, and I would ask anyone who feels omitted to accept my apologies. I have, I hope, made clear above my gratitude to all teams who have hosted me, and everyone who has written to me or taken me aside at an event. I would like to thank all members of the Advisory Council for help and support at various times, particularly the Chair, Pete Simpson. He has shared freely his experience and advice when called upon and I am grateful to him. I have praised our Area Reps above for all they have done at a local level; I should also mention our Overseas Bagman, Eddie Worrall, who is giving up his last element of Ring responsibility at this ARM and thank him all for all he accomplished in 16 years for the Ring. Chris Wildridge, chair of the Morris Ring Archive Group, deserves my thanks for the progress he has made. And in the JMO, I hope I can just thank Pauline Woods-Wilson and Jen Cox, and they will pass on my thanks to their committees with whom I have worked so much.

My final thanks must of course go to my two fellow Officers, Peter Austin and Clayton Francis. They have been a delight to work with, whether as fellow officers, friends or dancers. Both have been unstinting in giving their time where it was needed, offering their views and between us I think we have made the right decisions. I am more grateful to them than I really can express—and I wish Peter a more restful time in his “retirement”, and Clayton all good wishes as he moves to welcoming his fifth Squire as Treasurer!

I must also add a note of public thanks to Helen. She has put up with my absences, my requests for lifts to railway stations, all without complaint; she even got into my computer once when I forgot to print a speech I was making at a feast. She has, as always, been very supportive and I appreciate it so much.

I end by wishing Emma my very best for the next two years, and hoping she enjoys herself as much as I have; advice is always at hand should she need it.

## **Bagman's Report**

*And now the end is near...* Trust Paul Anka to get all the good lines! In trying to write this report I looked back through my previous reports for some inspiration. One thing that struck me was that my annual report appeared to double in length in each year, so I shall try to stick to one page this time, as there's a lot to look at elsewhere!

Another year of wonderful dancing and camaraderie has passed. Days of dance, Ring meetings, festivals, ales and feasts all flash by; it's hard not be sentimental about the good times going back through the photos after events. If only wishing made these things last forever... Since I took over from Jon in 2021 we have seen a gradual return to something approaching normality for us. It's difficult sometimes to reflect that in my first year in office we didn't do very much collectively beyond a few online sessions, but looking at the list of events coming up this year I don't think anyone would say the COVID years have diminished the drive within teams to get out and dance. Most of this enthusiasm is often harboured in a minority of individuals within a team, and to those people I say keep it up. As to the rest, if you're not already there give these guys a hand as nothing happens without effort!

All the usual things apply; thanks to all the people behind the scenes, please let us know if you'd like to host a Ring meeting, please keep your contact details up to date on the website, please let event organisers know you want to come asap, thanks to teams that have invited officers to share in their special events.

As we end our celebration of 90 years of the Morris Ring, our friends in the Morris Federation are beginning to mark 50 years of operations in 2025. I would like to formally offer my congratulations to them. Once upon a time such a statement in a Bagman's report would be unthinkable. Today, we can celebrate the progress we've all made over the years.

I would just like to thank everyone who's helped me when requested, this organisation requires a lot of quiet and often thankless work to happen in order to get the things everyone wants to work. If you've never considered getting involved with running the Ring but are interested in doing so, I would strongly encourage you to speak to an officer or your area rep. It can be demanding, but the rewards can be very satisfying in turn. This organisation relies on many people selflessly giving their time, and there's always room for another person to share the load.

A special thanks from me to those people who offer a sympathetic ear when I'm finding things difficult. Your counsel and support are greatly appreciated, I think everyone benefits when they have strong support networks around them in good times and bad.

After the ARM, the Ring will have some significant changes in personnel, and I would ask the membership to be mindful and patient of this during the transfers of various offices.

Regardless of the election results, I wish my successor the best of luck.

Not much else can be said here and now, so in the words of Douglas Adams 'So long, and thanks for all the fish!'

Peter Austin/Cheesy

## **Treasurer's Report**

### **2024 Morris Ring Treasurer's Report to the Morris Ring ARM - 1st March 2025**

#### **1 Introduction**

This is my 7th Treasurer's Report. At the time of writing, the 2024 accounts have nearly been completed and will be published. Still, I can confirm that our underlying finances are very sound. I have changed the current subscription structure following the changes made at last year's ARM.

#### **2 Membership**

Standard renewal fees were unchanged;

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

Full	£50	Associate	£40	Joint	Removed
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Joint sides will transition to either Full Membership or Associate. If a Side wishes to obtain their JMO insurance from one of the other JMO organisations yet wishes to remain within the Morris Ring then they can become Associates with the insurance element removed, currently £13.

#### **3 Insurance**

Our insurance cover arranged as part of the JMO has been finalised for 2025. This year we are again including individual Personal Accident Insurance as part of the cover offered to sides.

#### **4 Classes of Membership**

Our 2024 membership renewals for 2025 consist of;

Full	130
Associate	26
International	5

Several sides have folded so the accuracy of the membership is in question and overall membership is down slightly. Any offer to assist in getting a more accurate picture of the membership would be greatly appreciated.

#### **5 Ring Finances**

The Shop - attended a few events in 2024. After many attempts have finally conducted a stocktake and are in the process of repossessing core stock items i.e. bells and black books with the intention to carry on with these lines. We have decided to write down 50% of the remaining stock this year and next. There is also the matter of lost revenue from stock shrinkage from the previous stocktake in 2019 which needs to be addressed.

Archive Fund – continues to support this important work.

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

Donations - £80 to the MDDDB continue. The MR also funded two laptops and associated software of £900 to the Archive Group to assist in their important work and made a one-off donation of £1500 to help mitigate the increased costs that Saddleworth Rushcart were experiencing. In addition, we funded the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the Morris Ring with an event at EFDSS and a multisite peel for £500.

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

The Cashless Refund Programme was taken up by just a few sides where the Ring refunded up to £100 for the purchase of a card reader. £184 was refunded making £4389.34 in total since it started. This equates to an average refund of £76.75. The programme is ongoing as there are only a few sides that have not taken up the initiative.

## **5 General policy and financial reserves**

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

## **6 Future Plans**

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

Our reserves on deposit (£64,734) are sitting there. At the last ARM, I outlined a series of Grants that we intend to introduce. How to do so has been put in a policy proposal and has been discussed by the Officers and is now ready to go in front of the Advisory Council at their meeting following the ARM. It should then be published to the membership

Regards,

23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025



Clayton Francis  
Treasurer  
The Morris Ring

### **Chairman of the Advisory Council Report**

The Advisory Council meet on two occasions, in the last twelve months. As usual immediately after the ARM and again in October.

Unlike many meeting in the last few years there was nothing major to discuss. Mainly the Squire seeking the experience within the AC to deal with the more everyday issues that affect Morris dancing but most of us never encounter. This is usually organising bigger events.

One ongoing issue is The Morris Shop. I would like to reassure the membership the officers are acutely aware of the problems and are constantly questioned on the subject.

On a personal note, I would like to extend my thanks to those who have helped me in this roll, especially the Bagmen I have worked with, Jon Melville & Peter Austin, for organising locations, zoom meetings and taking minutes. It is normally a two-year position mirroring the term of office of the Squire however for various reasons I have served four & a half years, but it is time to stand down and I would like to wish my successor as much pleasure as I have had in filling this posted.

Carry on Capering

Pete Simpson

### **Archive Group Report**

Report not available at time of publication

## Web Editor's Report

Our “shiny new” platform continues to run problem free (thanks to Martin Jones) and seems to be enjoyed by many, new and old content alike, as can be seen from the Top 20 pages details for the past 12 months below

Page title and screen class	Views	Active users
Total	150,601 100% of total	72,649 100% of total
1 The Morris Ring	15,365	11,723
2 Find a Side Near You   The Morris Ring	5,970	3,926
3 Content   The Morris Ring	4,920	1,890
4 Saddleworth Rushcart 2024   The Morris Ring	4,401	3,016
5 The Morris Tradition   The Morris Ring	3,975	3,202
6 A Handbook of Morris Dances   The Morris Ring	3,734	2,353
7 Traditional Morris Events: May Day & May Bank Holiday   The Morris Ring	3,619	2,963
8 Girls' Carnival Morris Dancing   The Morris Ring	2,938	2,476
9 Morris Traditions and Tunes   The Morris Ring	2,921	1,648
10 Morris Dance Music   The Morris Ring	2,875	1,979
11 Thaxted Annual Weekend of Dance   The Morris Ring	2,612	1,644
12 List of all future events   The Morris Ring	2,542	1,993
13 Traditional Morris Events: Christmas   The Morris Ring	1,964	1,546
14 Bagman's Newsletters   The Morris Ring	1,875	1,127
15 The Morris Ring Events Calendar   The Morris Ring	1,811	1,413
16 Elected Officers of the Morris Ring   The Morris Ring	1,703	1,231
17 Sorry - no such page!   The Morris Ring	1,688	1,211
18 Traditional Morris Events   The Morris Ring	1,623	1,361
19 The Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts Unconvention 2024 - Birmingham   The Morris Ring	1,313	768
20 Bampton   The Morris Ring	1,201	678

*(produced using Google Analytics – results for the other 474 items on request!)*

Position 17 is held by “No Such Page” – so a gentle reminder to “Baggers” to correct your side’s Ring web page entry if you change your web site address – or close it! I’m sure you all know how to update by now – but if in doubt do contact me and I’ll send you the ~~Site~~ User Guide with pleasure.

The “Traditional Events” pages seem well worth the investment in my time – especially when linked on Facebook, so please do let me know of what you describe as your “traditional events” (it doesn’t have to date back centuries!). And a reminder that we will include your Days of Dance on our events

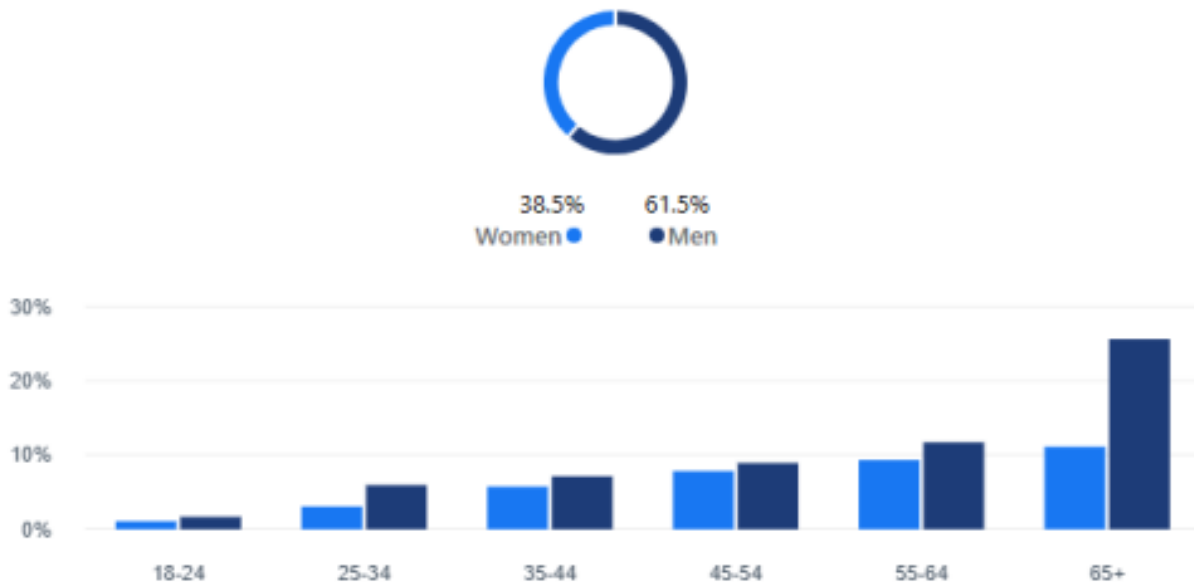


calendar (now with buttons so you can add them to your on-line diary), especially if you wish to open invitations other sides. Just <mailto:webeditor@themorrisring.org>

We've added another 400 Facebook followers who now total over 2400 despite me continuing to weed back a fair number of dodgy likes and followers. Our posts reached 11,265 people in January!

Followers ⓘ 2,403

### Age and gender



Now less than two thirds of our audience identify as male, which is quite a reduction over the years, (75% in 2014) but the majority are still over 65 – and just in case you needed a graph -

It still seems the most appropriate social media for our type of content and ability to moderate, even without Fact Checkers! We have also added [Bluesky](#) to our social media output.

The web news subscription service continues to be active – we have 154 subscribers currently. You can join to receive links to Morris Ring news items and important updates direct to your email in box using our MailChimp [subscription form](#). I promise not to inundate you – usually about once a month. You may unsubscribe from the service at any time. Your details will not be shared with any third party and will be deleted should you unsubscribe.

And finally, if you have ideas how we can improve our offering or service, do let us know. We may not have thought of everything – but we keep trying.

Yours foolishly  
Peter de Courcy

## Overseas Bagman Report

I will keep this report fairly short, based on the responses I have had from the Morris Ring's overseas clubs.

As any area rep will tell you, communication to and from the clubs they represent is the essence of their role. However, with the overseas clubs being spread over 3 continents, that's a little harder...

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

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

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

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

Perth MM celebrate their 50th year in 2024 and are set to perform at the Fairbridge Festival, the major West Australian folk event this year. Their numbers are steady, and they performed at the National Ale in their home city in 2023. Dancing out with the other Perth sides is part of their annual programme, as is entertaining the occasional stray UK Morris dancer who visits on their travels.

If any sides in the UK are looking to travel over to meet up with our overseas sides, please let me know. Also, if any sides are planning trips overseas generally, a short report to pass on tips, experiences or contacts which may help other sides plan something similar, are always welcome.

Cheers

Ed Worrall

Morris Ring Overseas Bagman

edworrall@gmail.com

## Documentation Related to Election for Bagman of the Morris Ring

### Candidate No. 1 - Jonathan "Jono" Millward - Harthill Morris

Fifteen years ago, I attended Harthill Morris' annual Boxing Day performance where my friend's father (and Harthill Squire) introduced me to a then-future Squire of the Morris Ring, telling me "talk to him, you're now a member." The rest, as they say, is history.

Still dancing with Harthill and Lord Conyers Morris, both members of the Morris Ring for over 40 years, I have also danced and drummed for an Open Morris Border side and a Morris Federation North-West side, have had the opportunity to dance Cotswold, North-West, Border and Longsword (and learning Rapper!) around the country, and been part of a Mummers group performing The Derby Tup. Currently Squire of Harthill Morris for a second time, I have also served as Publicity Officer and Webmaster for well over a decade and proudly took on the role of North Area Representative for the Morris Ring from 2018 until 2021.

Outside of the morris I work and have worked as IT and media support, data validator and Business Support Manager, finding my niche in technical and administrative supporting roles.

I am excited for the chance to support Emma in the landmark role of first female Squire of the Morris Ring, and to face the challenge of building on the great work already done in the areas of recruitment and equality, diversity and inclusion by both the Morris Ring and the wider JMO. My time in the morris has been one of great enjoyment and companionship, and it is important for me to be able to support this and the Morris Ring in continuing for everyone for many years to come.



### **Nomination letter from Wath Morris**

Wath Morris

Redacted for GDPR

Thursday, 12 December 2024

The Bagman  
Morris Ring

Dear Bagman

**Nomination of Jonathan Millward for Bagman of the Morris Ring**

Wath Morris would be delighted to nominate Jonathan (Jono) Millward for the position of Bagman for the Morris Ring. Jono is currently squire of Harthill Morris with whom we have had a long relationship going back almost 50 years. In that time, we have attended each other's feast, danced together and were delighted to have them at our Ring Meeting. Harthill are an excellent side both in dancing and socially and Jono is an admirable leader. We feel sure that he will be an asset to the Ring if elected and are more than happy to formally nominate him.

Yours sincerely

Tim

For All Wath Morris

Tim Binns  
Bagman  
Tel: 07884433324  
E: wathmorris@aol.com

## **Candidate No. 2 – Rob Evans - Thaxted Morris**

The Morris Ring is a wonderful organisation steeped in history and tradition - and rightly aims to promote fraternity between its members and friendships between sides.

My morris story started as a musician, joining Lassington Oak Morris to learn to dance. I later joined Thaxted and Cambridge Morris Men. As Bagman of Thaxted I've gained essential experience in running a side as well as organising the historic Thaxted Morris Weekend. I've built up extensive expertise in the power of connection - whether in social media, or through more complex work with the Ring supporting other sides and addressing historical issues.

At Thaxted we work closely and dance with other Ring sides, and Federation sides - as well as developing positive communication with Open Morris. This has been fruitful without having to compromise our side's Ring culture or identity.

My professional background has built on my extensive skills in communication, organisation, emotional intelligence, and in working cooperatively and effectively. I've worked in a broad range of sectors including running my own business restoring listed properties, school teaching, floristry, and working for Thaxted parish council as Guildhall custodian.

If elected my priority would be the daily running of the Ring, alongside building positive relationships within the JMO that respect the culture, heritage and esprit de corps of the Ring. I also would aim at empowering member sides to get more involved in the Ring at grassroots level, making us more representative and more welcoming to sides old and new.



**Nomination letter from Chalice Morris Men**



## **The Chalice Morris Men**

Redacted for GDPR

12 December 2024

Dear Peter,

### **Nomination of the Morris Ring Bagman**

On behalf of The Chalice Morris Men I have pleasure in the nomination and support for Rob Evans of Thaxted Morris Men who we consider will carry out the duties of Bagman and be an asset to The Morris Ring.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Chapman". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Martin Chapman

Squire of The Chalice Morris Men

**Proposed changes to ‘Meetings and Advisory Council Policy’ by Nigel Strudwick and Peter Austin (Squire and Bagman of the Morris Ring respectively)**

***Preface from the Squire***

The Squire’s Commission that produced the Morris Ring Constitution in 2022 created several “Supporting Policy Documents”. The aim was that the Constitution itself, as the governing document of the Morris Ring, should be short, setting the basic rules, and that other documents should be created to support the basic aims of the Constitution. Making changes to the Constitution itself should be infrequent and significant, not least at changes require a two-thirds majority of the membership; Supporting Documents, on the other hand, being policies and procedures, are more likely to need updating regularly to reflect current practice. It was envisaged that they would need review every few years.

The Bagman and I undertook such a review in Summer 2024. There are five such documents:

Diversity and Inclusion Policy \*  
Meetings and Advisory Council Policy  
Ring Safeguarding Commitment\*  
Safeguarding Policy  
Complaints Procedure

These documents have also been reviewed by the Advisory Council, and we present them here to the membership for its approval. Those marked \* have not been altered and are thus not attached. Changed passages are in red; text proposed for removal is in ~~red-strikethrough~~, although where a complete paragraph has been changed, the earlier version is given *in italics*.

The main changes are in the Meetings and Advisory Council document, in particular the inclusion of the proxy voting system that has been used in recent elections. The changes to the Safeguarding Policy remove an outdated qualification to the word “gender” in S1.2 and clarify in S4.2 that the individual referred to in the second paragraph is the one to whom possible abuse is reported. Complaints paragraph C2.4.2 is altered to be explicit that if the police become involved in a complaint, all activity must stop.

We hope that these changes will give the membership no problems. Please contact me before the meeting if you have any concerns.

Nigel Strudwick

Squire of the Morris Ring



## **Morris Ring - Meetings and Advisory Council Policy**

### **M1. GENERAL**

M1.1 Meetings may be conducted by personal or remote attendance of the participants or by a mixture of methods, as appropriate to the circumstances, at the discretion of the Squire, or, in the case of Advisory Council meetings, the chair of the Advisory Council.

### **M2. ANNUAL REPRESENTATIVES' MEETINGS (ARM)**

M2.1 Member clubs will be given at least three months' notice of the date and location of the annual representatives' meeting by the Bagman.

M2.2 Any of the following must be received by the Bagman no later than two months before the meeting:

- Nominations for elected officers
- Nominations for Area Representatives
- proposed alterations to the constitution
- formal resolutions for discussion

M2.3 In the case of nominations for elected officers and Area Representatives, each nomination will be accompanied by short biographical details of the candidate, no more than 250 words in length, and their photograph. For elected officers, a nominating club's supporting statement is also required.

*ORIGINAL TEXT: In the case of nominations for elected officers and Area Representatives, each nomination will be accompanied by short biographical details of the candidate, their photograph and the nominating club's supporting statement, no more than 250 words in length.*

M2.4 The Treasurer will recommend to the ARM the level of annual subscription for full and associate members' insurance as provided by the Morris Ring through the JMO policy. For associate clubs that have their insurance via another JMO organisation, the Treasurer will make the appropriate adjustment to their subscription.

*ORIGINAL TEXT: The Treasurer will recommend to the ARM the level of annual subscription for full member clubs, including public liability insurance, and for associate members, including public liability insurance where equivalent cover is not held elsewhere.*

M2.5 The Bagman will circulate details of the matters set out above to member clubs no later than one month before the meeting.

M2.6 In the case of elections of officers, member clubs wishing to send their vote to the Bagman in advance, should do so in writing (including by electronic means), to arrive at least seven days before the meeting. Voting in advance will normally only be available for officer elections.

### **M3. OTHER REPRESENTATIVES' MEETINGS**

M3.1 When a representatives' meeting (other than the ARM) has been called, it will normally be held within four weeks and the Bagman will give notice of the meeting at least two weeks beforehand, together with any necessary information.

### **M4. VOTING PROCEDURE - GENERAL**

M4.1 Voting for all matters is normally on the basis of a simple majority of votes cast, except for constitutional amendments and suspension or removal of clubs from membership, where a two-thirds majority of member clubs voting is required; however, if there are more than two candidates for the posts of Squire, Bagman or Treasurer, the alternative vote system<sup>1</sup> is used.

M4.2 Each full member club is entitled to one vote in each election or other matter to be determined. Associate clubs may attend a representatives' meeting, but shall not vote.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Electoral Reform Society's explanation of the alternative vote system at: <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/voting-systems/types-of-voting-system/alternative-vote/>



## **M5. VOTING PROCEDURE - ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

M5.1 The Bagman will send one ballot paper to each member club with the formal notice of the meeting for use either as a postal vote, if the club is not sending a delegate to the ARM, or as a ballot paper at the ARM. In accordance with procedures at Local and Parliamentary Elections, these will be uniquely marked to allow checking and/or reissue as/if required.

M5.2 Reasonable time will be allowed at the meeting for open discussion about the candidates. By convention, the candidates do not speak on their own behalf and are not present during the discussion, of which no minutes are taken.

M5.3 With the consent of the meeting, the Squire will appoint a Returning Officer and a deputy to conduct the ballot and count and may appoint at least two independent scrutineers. None of these shall be current officers of the Morris Ring or candidates.

M5.4 The name of each club submitting a ballot paper will be marked on a voting register. The ballot papers should not indicate the name of the club voting.

M5.5 Postal votes should be enclosed in a sealed envelope bearing the name of the member club on whose behalf the vote is submitted or, if submitted by electronic means, printed and placed in suitably marked envelopes by the Bagman before the meeting.

- The Returning Officer will check to ensure the submitting club has voting rights.
- The club's name will be marked on the register of clubs as having voted.
- The ballot paper will be added to those ready for sorting/counting and the envelope discarded.
- Postal votes submitted in a form other than described above will be treated as spoilt.

*THE FOLLOWING M5.6 IS A NEW POINT AND THUS THE SUBSEQUENT SECTIONS OF M5 HAVE HAD THEIR NUMBER INCREASED BY 1*

**M5.6 Any individual attending the meeting, being a member of a full member club, other than the Bagman or Returning Officer, may act as proxy for another club in the election of officers. A club requesting a proxy vote must contact the Bagman at least seven days before the meeting, nominating their agreed proxy, and the club will be issued a Proxy Ballot Paper that should be forwarded to their proxy. Proxies should hand their forms to the Bagman before the election.**

- **The Returning Officer will check to ensure the submitting club has voting rights and that the Proxy is eligible to act in that capacity.**
- **The club's name will be marked on the register of clubs as having voted.**
- **The ballot paper will be added to those ready for sorting/counting.**

M5.7 If there are more than two candidates, the alternative vote system is used:

- Member clubs rank candidates in order of preference by marking 1, 2, 3 etc. Member clubs may rank as many or as few candidates as they wish or vote for one candidate.
- First preference votes are counted first. If a candidate receives more than 50% of the first preference votes, then they are elected.
- If no candidate reaches 50%, the candidate with the fewest first preference votes is eliminated. Their second preference votes are reallocated to the remaining candidates. If one candidate has more votes than the other remaining candidates put together, that candidate is elected.
- If not, the process is repeated until one candidate has more votes than the other remaining candidates put together. This candidate wins the election.

M5.8 In the event of equality of votes or, at the discretion of the Returning Officer, a near equality of votes, the result should first be verified by a recount, to eliminate any doubts or concerns.

M5.9 In later rounds, in case of equality of votes, a higher number of votes in the earliest round gives precedence. In the case of continued equality, the following process<sup>2</sup> will be adopted:

- The Returning Officer marks a blank ballot paper for each of the two tied candidates, folds them, places them in a suitable receptacle and then draws one ballot “blind”. The candidate for whom it is marked is awarded one more vote [in that round only].

M5.10 Announcement of results by the Returning Officer:

- The results of the ballot will be announced to the meeting at a convenient point as soon as the result is known.
- In keeping with the principle of open democracy, the number of votes for each candidate will be given.
- The number of spoilt papers and a summary of the reasons for their exclusion will also be given.

## **M6. MEETING PROCEDURES**

M6.1 So that representatives’ meetings may be conducted efficiently and equitably, the following procedures will normally be adopted:

M6.2 Motions will be considered in the order that they appear on the agenda unless the meeting decides otherwise.

M6.3 Motions and amendments will be proposed and seconded.

M6.4 Motions may be withdrawn by the proposer with the consent of the seconder and the meeting.

M6.5 An amendment is a proposal to remove or add words to a motion, not to negate the motion.

M6.6 If an amendment to the original motion is carried, the original motion as amended becomes the substantive motion upon which further amendments may be moved.

M6.7 A representative may move an amendment to their own motion if agreed by the meeting and any seconder.

M6.8 If there is more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion, the amendments will be moved and debated in the order directed by the chair.

M6.9 One or more amendments may be discussed together if the chair considers it expedient, but each amendment will be voted upon separately.

M6.10 A representative shall not move more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion.

M6.11 The mover of an amendment has no right of reply at the end of debate on it.

M6.12 Where a series of amendments to an original motion are carried, the mover of the original motion will have a right of reply either at the end of debate of the first amendment or at the very end of debate on the final substantive motion immediately before it is put to the vote.

M6.13 Unless permitted by the chair, a representative may speak only once in the debate on a motion except:

- to speak on an amendment moved by another representative;
- to move or speak on another amendment if the motion has been amended since they last spoke;
- to make a point of order; or
- in exercise of a right of reply.

M6.14 A point of order will be decided by the chair and their decision will be final.

M6.15 When a motion is under debate, no other motion will be moved except:

- to amend the motion;
- to put the motion to a vote;

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from relevant instructions for Returning Officers in Local and Parliamentary Elections

- to refer a motion to the Advisory Committee for consideration;
- to proceed to the next business;
- to ask that a person to be no longer heard or that they leave the meeting;
- to adjourn the debate;
- to adjourn the meeting; or
- to propose a guillotine motion.

M6.16 Before an original or substantive motion is put to the vote, the chair will be satisfied that the motion has been sufficiently debated and that the mover of the motion under debate has exercised or waived their right of reply.

M6.17 Excluding motions moved under 6.15 above, the contributions by a representative will relate only to the motion under discussion.

## **M7. THE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

M7.1 The Advisory Council consists of the three elected officers, officers elect and all past officers of the Morris Ring, for a maximum of six years following the conclusion of their term of office, together with elected representatives for geographical areas. The purpose of the Council is to advise and assist the Squire and the other elected officers to further the objects of the Morris Ring, to take action in an emergency and any other appropriate matters.

M7.2 It elects its own Chair, who shall not be a currently elected officer.

M7.3 The Squire or the Advisory Council may invite others to assist it, as necessary. Those individuals will not have voting rights in the Advisory Council's deliberations.

M7.4 Area Representatives are elected on a three-year cycle as members of the Advisory Council. They represent member and associate clubs based in the following general geographical areas (shown in the map below), subject to the agreement of individual clubs:

- Eastern
  - Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Greater London (part), Hertfordshire (part), Lincolnshire (part), Norfolk, Rutland, Suffolk
- North
  - East Riding of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire (part). North Yorkshire (part), South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire
- North West
  - Cheshire, Derbyshire (part), Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside
- South West & Wales
  - Bristol, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire (part), Somerset, Wales, Wiltshire, Channel Islands
- West Midlands
  - Gloucestershire (part), Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire (part), Warwickshire (part), West Midlands, Worcestershire
- North East
  - Cumbria, Durham, North Yorkshire (part), Northumberland, Scotland, Tyne and Wear
- East Midlands
  - Derbyshire (part), Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire (part), Warwickshire (part)
- South Midlands
  - Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Greater London (part), Hampshire (part), Hertfordshire (part), Oxfordshire
- South East

- East Sussex, Greater London (part), Hampshire (part), Isle of Wight, Kent, Surrey, West Sussex

M7.5 The Overseas Bagman will represent non-UK member clubs on behalf of the elected officers, as necessary.

## The Morris Ring

Regional Areas



## **MORRIS RING SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

### **S1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this policy is to promote good practice, providing vulnerable people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of the Morris Ring.

The Morris Ring, within its activities, will ensure that vulnerable people are kept safe.

The Morris Ring is committed to promoting policies so that everyone involved in morris dancing is aware of their responsibilities to safeguard vulnerable people from harm and abuse. This means to follow procedures to protect vulnerable people and report any concerns about their welfare to appropriate authorities.

For the purpose of this document a “vulnerable person” includes any child, young person and any individual who is considered to be vulnerable, whatever their age.

A child or young person is defined as a person under the age of 18 (section 105(1), Children Act 1989). The terms “child” and “young person” are used interchangeably in this document.

For vulnerable adults, the terms “adult at risk” or “adult at risk of harm” are also used and can be described as “an adult who requires assistance in the conduct of their own affairs”.

References to “elected officers” are to the officers of the Morris Ring.

### **S1.2 POLICY STATEMENT**

The Morris Ring is committed to the following:

- the welfare of the vulnerable person is paramount
- all people, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender (~~notwithstanding constitutional restrictions~~), language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in morris dancing in an enjoyable and safe environment
- taking all reasonable steps to protect vulnerable people from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- working in partnership with parents, guardians, carers and vulnerable people is essential for the protection of vulnerable people.

### **S1.3 MONITOR AND REVIEW POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

The implementation of procedures should be regularly monitored and reviewed. The Bagman of the Morris Ring should regularly report to the Squire and other officers about progress, challenges, difficulties, achievements, gaps and areas where changes are required.

The policy should be reviewed every three years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

## **PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE**

### **S2.1 INTRODUCTION**

To provide vulnerable people with the best possible experience and opportunities in morris dancing everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of participants in morris dancing to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place.

However, it is their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse, and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the vulnerable person as explained in section 4.

This section will assist in identifying what is meant by good practice.

## **S2.2 GOOD PRACTICE**

The Morris Ring should adhere to the following principles and action:

- Ensure member clubs are aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding their members attending events
- work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations) and encouraging open communication with no secrets
- make the experience of morris dancing enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying
- treat all vulnerable people with respect and dignity
- be mindful of the welfare needs of vulnerable people present
- avoid unnecessary physical contact. Where any form of manual or physical support is required, it should be provided openly and with consent.
- aim to give positive, constructive feedback
- keep a written record of any incident or injury that occurs, along with details of any outcomes

Involvement of parents/carers

- Involve parents or carers wherever possible, so that they know where the person in their care is, who they are with and what they are doing.
- secure parental or carers' consent for the club to act *in loco parentis*, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if required

## **DEFINING ABUSE**

### **S3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Abuse is any form of physical, emotional, financial or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to physical or psychological injury or harm. Abuse can happen to anyone regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

### **S3.2 INDICATORS OF ABUSE**

It is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place.

Indications that someone is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- an injury on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries for which an explanation seems inconsistent
- the vulnerable person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- someone expresses concern about the welfare of a third party
- unexplained changes in behaviour including but not limited to: becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn, displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- inappropriate sexual awareness in minors
- engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- distrust of adults by children, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected

The above list is not exhaustive; the presence of one or more of the indications is not proof that abuse is taking place.

It is **NOT** the responsibility of the Morris Ring to decide that abuse is occurring. It **IS** everybody's

responsibility to act on any concerns.

### **S3.3 Use of Photography or Filming Equipment at Events**

Performances and events may be used as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of vulnerable people. Any concerns should be reported to an Elected Officer.

## **RESPONDING TO SUSPICIONS AND ALLEGATIONS**

### **S4.1 INTRODUCTION**

There is a responsibility to act on any concerns raised through contact with the appropriate authorities. This applies to allegations or suspicions of abuse occurring within the Morris Ring, and to allegations or suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

This section explains how to respond to allegations or suspicions.

### **S4.2 RECEIVING EVIDENCE OF POSSIBLE ABUSE**

Awareness of possible abuse may arise in various ways. It may be reported to the Morris Ring by someone else or directly by the vulnerable person affected.

If a vulnerable person says or indicates that they are being abused, the individual **to whom the abuse is being reported** should:

- **stay calm** so as not to frighten the vulnerable person
- **reassure** the vulnerable person that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- **listen** to the vulnerable person, showing that they are being taken seriously
- **keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and vulnerable person abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the vulnerable person has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify.
- **inform** the vulnerable person that other people must be informed about what they have said. Tell the vulnerable person this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- **safety of the vulnerable person is paramount.** If the vulnerable person needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a vulnerable person protection issue
- **record** all information
- **report** the incident to an elected officer immediately

### **S4.3 RECORDING INFORMATION**

A detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure or concern. The individual recording the incident should confine themselves to the facts and distinguish between personal knowledge and other sources. The individual should not include their own opinions.

Information should include the following where possible:

- the vulnerable person's name, age, date of birth and contact details
- the details of the allegation or disclosure, including dates, times and any other relevant information (including details of any witnesses)
- the date and time the incident was disclosed

### **S4.4 REPORTING THE CONCERN**

The elected officers of the Morris Ring will take responsibility for Safeguarding as part of their role. If they are not available, the individual concerned should take responsibility and seek appropriate advice.

In the event of an incident being reported, the elected officers will:

- refer the matter to the appropriate authorities
- decide who will deal with any media enquiries
- take any other appropriate action

In the event of an elected officer being the subject of a disclosure or allegation, a report must be made to the Chairman of the Morris Ring Advisory Council, who will follow the above steps

#### **S4.5 CONFIDENTIALITY**

Every effort should be made to ensure confidentiality is maintained without compromising the safety of those concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only.

All information should be stored in a secure place with access limited to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

#### **DECLARATION**

On behalf of the Morris Ring, we will oversee the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to. This safeguarding policy supersedes all previous versions.

**Signed on behalf of the officers of the Morris Ring:**

**Name**

**Date**



# MORRIS RING COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

## CONTEXT NOTES

There are numerous situations where a complaint may be made to the Morris Ring. In all cases the same procedure will be followed.

### C1 SOURCES OF COMPLAINTS

- C1.1. Member clubs of the Ring.
- C1.2. Officers or Area Representatives.
- C1.3. Members of the public or press.
- C1.4. Other organisations, which interact with the Ring or its members, such as: the JMO, local authorities, groups who have commissioned Morris performances.

*If individuals have a complaint about their own club, it should be resolved locally.*

*Only in the event of total failure of that process, would the Ring endeavour to resolve the matter.*

### C2 TYPES OF COMPLAINT

- C2.1. **Non-compliance** with any codes of practice published by the Ring, which may include:
  - C2.1.1. Safeguarding.
  - C2.1.2. Discrimination.
  - C2.1.3. Health and Safety.
  - C2.1.4. Insurance conditions.
- C2.2. **Maladministration.**
  - C2.2.1. This may include such things as obstruction, incompetence, dereliction of duty, financial impropriety or abusive behaviour.
- C2.3. **Disputes between Member Teams or other Morris Teams.**
- C2.4. **Illegal activities.**
  - C2.4.1. These may include such things as: theft, drug use or sales, misuse of property or equipment, smuggling, etc.
  - C2.4.2. Serious breaches of safeguarding or discrimination laws.

Items in Section 2.4 would normally be referred directly to the police, **at which point any investigation by the Officers of the Morris Ring must cease.**

~~However, the Officers of the Morris Ring would need to be aware of anything that may impact on its reputation.~~

### C3 PERSONS OR BODIES COMPLAINED AGAINST

These may include:

- C3.1. Officers of the Morris Ring
- C3.2. Area representatives.
- C3.3. Persons or groups with Morris Ring related responsibilities, such as: Overseas Bagman, Archive Group members, shop administrator, appointed instructor, webmaster.
- C3.4. Member Teams.
- C3.5. Members of the Advisory Council.
- C3.6. Should the complaint relate to all three elected Ring Officers, the matter would be referred to the Chair of the Advisory Council. After a decision by the Advisory Council, actions as in section 7.4 below would be implemented.

*Complaints about individual members of Morris Ring Teams must be dealt with locally.*

*The **Officers of the Morris Ring** would only be involved in exceptional circumstances.*

#### **C4 AUTHORITY**

- C4.1. The Squire of the Morris Ring has the authority to effect any of the outcomes defined below, either immediately, or in a specified time.
- C4.2. In the case of suspension or exclusion, the decision must be done in consultation with the Morris Ring Advisory Council and ratified at an ARM, or a special meeting called for the purpose.

#### **C5 SUMMARY**

- C5.1. It is hoped that few situations arise that lead to such formal complaints. However, should they occur, the Morris Ring will endeavour to resolve them amicably in as short a time as possible.
- C5.2. It should be remembered that this is a voluntary organisation, not structured for litigation.
- C5.3. The purpose of these procedures is to ensure correct handling and transparency in the event of significant problems occurring.

### **PROCEDURES**

These procedures relate only to the Morris Ring and its own activities, not to member teams. Matters relating only to member teams must be processed locally.

#### **C6 METHOD OF DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS TO THE MORRIS RING**

*In the event of a complaint against an elected officer, then clause 3.6 will apply*

- C6.1. An elected officer of the Morris Ring is informed of the complaint.
  - C6.1.1. Methods appropriate to the complainant may be used, but must be recorded, and followed up in writing, giving the basic details of the case.
- C6.2. The officer acknowledges the complaint.
- C6.3. The same officer informs the other elected officers and any other parties that may be affected, such as insurance providers, or other Morris organisations.
- C6.4. The officers investigate, review the case and agree the appropriate outcome.
- C6.5. The complainant is informed of the outcome.

#### **C7 Possible Outcomes of the Review.**

- C7.1. No action to be taken. (The reason for this may need to be explained.)
- C7.2. Report to appropriate bodies such as the JMO, police, social services or health care for further action.
- C7.3. Sanctions against teams, which could include:
  - C7.3.1. A warning
  - C7.3.2. Temporary suspension until the problem is rectified
    - C7.3.2.1. *In the event of a Temporary Suspension, arrangements would be made to maintain the member's insurance cover until its expiry date.*
  - C7.3.3. Exclusion
    - C7.3.3.1. *In the event of exclusion, the team would be informed that insurance cover would not be renewed by the Morris Ring.*
  - C7.3.4. Appointment of someone to monitor the team (preferably their Area Representative)
- C7.4. Sanctions against individuals, which could include:
  - C7.4.1. A warning.
  - C7.4.2. Instruction to rectify a situation.
  - C7.4.3. Removal from office.

## **C8 Appeals**

- C8.1. A complainant, who is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, has the right to request a review by the Advisory Council.
- C8.2. The Chair of the Advisory Council will inform the appellant of the decision.
  - C8.2.1. Any decision overturning that of the elected officers requires a two thirds majority of the full Advisory Council.
- C8.3. No further appeals will be entertained.

## **C9 Confidentiality**

- C9.1. Unless a criminal offence is alleged or suspected, which has to be divulged to police or other authorities, details of complaints will be restricted to those directly involved.
- C9.2. No press statements or other media responses will be made, other than to say that the matter is being dealt with by the Morris Ring in line with its Complaints Procedure.
- C9.3. No personal information about individuals or groups involved will be divulged to external bodies, unless legally required.
- C9.4. Complaint Information held electronically by the Ring will only be retained in line with current legislation.

## **Nominations of Teams for Full Membership of the Morris Ring**

### **Application for The Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts for full membership of the Morris Ring**

The Illustrious Order was originally set up many years ago by Johnny Burke, Trevor Nunn and Maurice Sunderland as an answer to counter the prevalent vision of the day of Morris Fools (and Animals) being too impulsive and uncontrollable, upsetting dancers within the dancing set. The idea was to arrange meetings and educate Fools and Animals in their behaviour!

There have been various name changes of the organisation over the years, including the United Union of Fools. The current name was adopted in the 2000s, to include Beasts (rather than Animals).

Over the years the Order has been variously an Associate side to enable us to have public liability insurance; just a mail subscriber and Joint Member of the Ring whilst we have also been members of the Morris Federation and Open Morris organisations.

At our Annual General Meeting in October, 2024, a majority decision was reached for the Order to request full membership of the Morris Ring, so that we could have the benefits of full membership, including voting rights.

Looking at the Ring constitution for an Associate side, the idea is for such a side to have dances which are practised and danced out. Until recently, we would simply form random sets up for dances at our annual Unconventions, but did not have dances of our own.

However, since 2022, at our Unconvention in the Wirral, with thanks to Clive du Mont who has composed two dances for Fools and Beasts, and to John Burke (Johnny's son) and Christina Pritchard who have instructed us with some border dances, we can now say that we can perform as a side; we have done so at our Unconventions in the Wirral, Brighton, and recently in Birmingham during Jockey's day of Dance.

We hold a workshop at each Unconvention to remind regular members and teach these dances to new members so that we are able to dance out, as well as carrying out the usual mayhem expected from us as Fools and Beasts!

We welcome any Morris dancer to join us if they are aspiring to be, or already are, a Fool, Beast, other Character, Musician, or indeed someone who wants to support us in our quest!

Can we therefore, on behalf of The Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts, ask for our application be considered to be a full member side in due course.

Stafford and Kennet Morris sides are sponsoring us in our application.

Yours

Rob Chisman,  
Scrivener and Convenor

Julian Kohler,  
Squire

**Proposing Team's Supporting Statement**



EMAIL: [webmaster@kennetmorris.com](mailto:webmaster@kennetmorris.com)

21 January 2025

**PROPOSAL TO UPGRADE THE ILLUSTRIOUS ORDER OF FOOLS AND BEASTS MEMBERSHIP OF THE MORRIS RING TO FULL MEMBER STATUS**

Kennet Morris has the honour of proposing that the Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts be granted Full Membership Status of the Morris Ring. As a long standing member of the order, the officers have approved my role in this.

They were Associate Members from 1979, having originally been formed by members of the Morris Ring, until recently opting for the new Joint Membership. At a resolution of the October 2024 Unconvention and AGM the members agreed to make this application, to enable them to enjoy all the associated benefits, including voting rights.

Whilst the open status of the Order's membership had previously precluded full membership, that is no longer an issue. In addition, the Order can claim to include an actual morris dancing team performing both traditional and self-devised dances at the Annual Unconvention, which are beyond compare.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Peter de Courcy'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a small yellow highlight above the 'e' in 'de'.

Peter de Courcy  
Fool to the Kennet Morris Men

Seconding Team's Supporting Statement



**Stafford  
Morris**

**A mixed, mainly Cotswold, side with history back to 16<sup>th</sup> Century**

Redacted for GDPR

**14<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

Redacted for GDPR

*knottyhotse@gmail.com*

**PROPOSAL TO UPGRADE THE ILLUSTRIOUS ORDER OF FOOLS AND  
BEASTS MEMBERSHIP OF THE MORRIS RING TO FULL MEMBER STATUS**

I have been authorised by Stafford Morris to formally second the Proposal by Kennet Morris that the Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts should be granted full membership of the Morris Ring.

The Fools Union, from which the Order emerged was founded as a group within the Morris Ring, but the Order's policy of open membership precluded full Ring membership. However, recent changes in the Ring admission rules should permit them to return as Full Members. Many members of the Order are also members of Ring sides and would appreciate the group returning to its roots.

On numerous occasions Stafford Morris have interacted with the Fools and Beasts and can vouch for their ability to entertain and promote the Morris.

On behalf of the Squire and members of Stafford Morris.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Edwards' with a stylized flourish underneath.

John Edwards, (AKA Knotty).

[www.staffordmorris.co.uk](http://www.staffordmorris.co.uk)  
[www.facebook.com/StaffordMorrisDancers](https://www.facebook.com/StaffordMorrisDancers)

## Area Representatives Reports

### **West Midlands Area Report – Matthew Turvey**

#### **1st Sedgley Morris**

What a year this has been!

To return to 2023 - a decision was made during that Summer that, owing to dwindling numbers, unless we recruited some more dancers, the side would inevitably be forced to hang up its bells. We decided on a recruitment drive in the form of a 6-week free course to learn the Morris – open to anyone. The result was that we were joined by 2 men and 4 women – all finished the course but 2 dropped out so we finished with 4 new members – we then recruited another 4 dancers and were joined by another musician. On the 7th of January at the AGM the side voted to allow the women to become members of the side as dancers. This was by the narrowest of margins 7 for, 6 against with one abstention. Unfortunately 3 members chose to leave the club at this point.

On the 9th of January 1st Sedgley Morris Men performed for the last time at the Annual Plough Tour with Jockey Morris around the streets of Birmingham.

On 22nd February, at the adjourned AGM, Ian Davies stepped down as Squire and was replaced by Dave Johnson, Dave Jeffery remained as Bagman, Paul Davis as Foreman and Graham Suffolk looking after our kit. Later in early June we were joined by Merlin Beedell – a very experienced dancer who brought our horse Jevons to new levels of excitement [please do not misinterpret this – it's all meant in the best possible taste!]. May one of the first “dance outs” in kit at our local “the Britannia” in Upper Gornal.

The Summer was our busiest for many years we attended some of our favourite annual events – St George's Day in Bilston, the Green Man Festival at the Oak House in West Bromwich, Chelmarsh Village Fete, The Junction Festival in Wolverhampton.

We danced at Dawn on Sedgley Beacon on May 1st for the first time since 2019. We danced out regularly with other local sides during the Summer evenings notably Bedcote, Black Adder, Beorma & Jockey. We, at last, attended as a dancing side Bedcote's Day of Dance in June. Later in August, we went to Stratford for Shakespeare's Ring meeting. Both fabulous days out with so many old and new friends and an introduction to the wider world of the “Morris” for some of our newer members.

27th July - Memorial day for Jack Roberts in Finstock with the Original Bampton Morris Men & Finstock Charlbury Morris Men. A wonderful day for Jack's friends and family to celebrate his life in the Morris. Attended by many ex-members of both Giffard and 1st Sedgley Morris Men.

JACK ROBERTS (pictured right) – 1952-2023 – member of Giffard Morris Men, Painters Morris Men, 1st Sedgley Morris Men [Squire & Foreman] 1982-2023. Since his move to the Cotswolds – the Original Bampton Morris Men and Charlbury Finstock Morris Men

In September, another 6-week course was developed and as a result of that we have gained another 8 dancers. A 'phone in to Gyles Brandreth on “this Morning” on ITV by Eddie Hyde brought another recruit – looking for activities for the over 70s! Paul Davis as foreman has really had his work cut



out on a Thursday evening teaching our new recruits whilst still maintaining the enthusiasm of our pre-existing members. The changes have inevitably brought about a change in our repertoire, but we look forward to expanding it back to the levels it was at 20 years ago!

What has been evident is that the family friendly, mutually supportive, good natured and enthusiastic attitude that has always been a feature of the side ever since 1979 has been maintained and enhanced.

We are, we recognise at present, very much a work in progress. We hope to build on the developments made last year. We approach the New Year with an active membership of 30+ including excellent musicians. For my part as a non-dancing [sadly] bagman I can only echo this quote from Alistair Dixon of Sweyn's Ey Morris in his reflections on becoming a mixed side a few years ago "Being mixed does change the atmosphere a bit but adapt or die. It's still wonderful being a Morris dancer in a thriving side."

David Jeffery, Bagman, 1st Sedgley Morris January 2025

### **Coventry Morris Men**

Overall CMM think that we have had a good year with a decent lot of dancing, a new member staying with us and other fun and excitement. We also have the prospect of another new member whose availability is currently restricted by his need to look after elderly parents. The side's profile is two members in their 30s and the rest in their 60s and 70s; we have had no serious interest from women (although a few slightly drunken requests!). The extra man has enabled us to return to 6-man dances in most cases.

We had good days on our traditional Sword and Whit Tours and other events both with other Morris sides and in community settings, getting out more than in previous years and making a number of new contacts which we hope will prove useful. Those members who got to the Evesham festival particularly enjoyed the day. Our summer Tuesday evenings dancing were more mixed with the usual problems with poor weather and the Euros football tournament affecting audience numbers. We have had to change our practice venue as the hall changed hands and the new owners, in spite of what they had said previously, not being prepared to be involved with the local community including ourselves. The side is stable financially.

Martin Trewinnard

### **Faithful City Morris Men**

The Side had another excellent year of dancing in 2024 at a range of mainly local events & venues. In total we did 250 dances during the 2024 Season (235 in 2023) and two Rapper Side performances (none in 2023). Overall, the Side remains "appropriately active" with 10 community events and 16 relaxed pub outings (7 of these with other local Sides) and one (regrettably) "forced cancellation" at short notice.

FCMM maintains a repertoire of 49 dances with three new (to us) dances added this year. Most were danced at least once, though firm favourites remain, with Fanny Frail, Evesham (our usual "crowd participation" set closer) being the most deployed (24 times) and only three other dances making double figures, Upton Volunteers, Upton Style Skirmish (12 times), Old Tom of Oxford, Bampton (11 times) and Ring o' Bells, Lichfield for eight dancers (10 times). We "refreshed" the



29th of May (Headington) for our Wednesday night at The Bull Baiters Inn, St John's area of Worcester on the 29th of May (Royal Oak Day).

It is clearly recognised that the reducing availability of our dancers & musicians (other priorities), re-location departures and advancing years are all steadily eroding the longer-term viability of the Side. The uncertainty arising from the intended sale of our (long term) practice venue continues (after 12 months) and will present a further challenge. On a brighter note we recognise that several younger / mixed / ladies Welsh Border Morris Sides (no Cotswold) have "sprung up" in our local area.

Robin Aitken, FCMM Bagman

### **Jockey Morris**

2024 was Jockey's 75th anniversary year. A busy one of dance both at home and abroad. We continue as a strong side priding ourselves on a wide range of dances done well. We have healthy numbers on our books, but as always could do with a few more active members. We began the year as we have since 1980 in January by hauling our Plough around the centre of Birmingham despite the cold and damp. This was followed by a number of events and attendances including the JMO in Newark and a warm sunny day in Walsall Arboretum with Glorishears. May started in a busy way at dawn on the Lickey Hills, followed a few days later by dancing in Warley Woods and Sandwell Valley. We danced at too many pubs to mention over the spring and summer with many friends including Aelfgythe, Anker, Bedcote, Belle D'Vain, First Sedgley, Shakespeare and White Hart.

The big event for us was in May to attend the WIVO Festival in Wilrijk, near Antwerp as guests of De Kegelar. This included dancing in the city, a stage show and a visit to an interesting care home that plied its residents with Belgian beer. We had several men looking to book themselves places in the future! We definitely made an impression on De Kegelar by drinking them out of the beer that had been brewed especially for them, though this time we didn't quite see off all of the Duvel.

We indulged ourselves in club history in June with a Memorabilia day which involved a celebration of lot of mementos, pictures and other items collected over the club's 75 years.

August saw us in Stratford for the Ring Day of Dance, a highly enjoyable event. The club was able to fly our (new) flag at Bromyard for the festival before a very successful day out with the Fools and Beasts in Birmingham amusing Ozzy the Bull in New Street Station with the assorted collection of Morris animals.

Our AGM saw a change in several office holders notably including Gary Chilvers stepping down as Bagman following many years of dedicated service. The club ended celebrating the passing of the year with a Curry in Bearwood.

Peter Taylor, Bagman

### **Shakespeare Morris**

Another year begins. 2024 has brought joy and sadness as we've said goodbye to two longstanding members who have relocated up North – thanks to Carol and Lindsay for the friendship over the years, here's hoping to a few morris 'capers' up your way in 2025's calendar!

The joys of 2024 were us dancing out with quite possibly the most sides we ever have: Aelfgythe, Belle D'Vain, Beorma, Tattered Court, Wychwayz, Flowers of Ilmington, Blackadder, Ragged Oak,

Chinewrde, Clerical Error, Plum Jerkum, Nancy Butterfly, Jockey Morris, Coventry Morris Men, 1st Sedgley, Anker, Bowbrook, Foxs Morris, Gidderskins, Gloucestershire Morris, White Hart, Hereburgh, Silhill and many more at Bromyard Folk Festival, Evesham Morris Weekend and the Fool's and Beast's Weekend in Birmingham.

Thanks go to everyone who's made our joint danceouts so enjoyable and thank you also to those who helped make our 65th and the Morris Ring's 90th Anniversary Ring Meeting in Stratford go so well – we'll be repeating the Stratford-upon-Avon Day of Dance again later this year. Here's to 2025, hope to join you all for a danceout again soon.

### **Stafford Morris**

Another fair year for Stafford in 2024, 40 events taken place, all jointly with our mates at Uttoxeter Heart of Oak. It has been revolutionary combining events calendars as we support each other. Having said that, both Sides are in a strong position now with plenty of active members. Our collaboration with Titanic Brewery sadly did not turn out quite as we expected, but rather pleased to report that we have another partner, Limestone Brewery in Stone. This is already proving to be excellent for both parties and our immediate benefit has been the supply of a barrel of beer FOC for our annual Feast.

Talking of our Feast, which was once again a successful event, with a change this year in that we decided to cook everything ourselves. The day was extremely enjoyable, as we spent the afternoon together (with maybe a little alcohol....) cooking the 3-course meal for guests. We had some really nice feedback, which makes it worthwhile. Financially, we had a benefit as it looks as though we broke even overall.

Last year saw Uttoxeter hold their 70th birthday bash, a great event that we enjoyed attending. We also danced out for our oldest surviving member, Fred Waygood. We went round to his house and danced on his drive, which he really enjoyed. Fred is now 93 (I think) and great that he is still able to be involved in some way.

Our AGM was typically uneventful, it does always astound us how we can spend 2 hours talking about not very much. A couple of festivals in 2024, which were good fun. Our big news for 2025 is we'll be at the Vale of Evesham Morris Weekend, the first time we've been to such an event for many a year. Hope to see some of you there.

Andy Chell

### **The Original Welsh Border Morris Men**

The Original Welsh Border Morris men meet only twice a year and had there only practice on the December 7<sup>th</sup> 2024 at the Bell Inn in St John's, it was well attended even though a few of our country members decided to cancel due to the adverse weather conditions on the day.

We had 8 new members including having the pleasure of the current Squire of the Ring, Nigel Strudwick. He attended both the practice and the tour, joining in on all the dances and enjoying both sessions.

The Tour was carried out on the last Saturday of December and again well attended.

One of our founding member's, John Barker, the previous Square of the Side nominated Mike Finn, our retired Bagman with many years' service to the side, as the new Squire of the side, it was unanimously passed at the AGM held in the Pershore pub.

The weather was being kind to us at all our venues apart from our last spot in Worcester outside the Guildhall where the heavens opened upon us. This luckily didn't dampen our dancers, but our musicians were a little concerned as no one had their wet weather gear with them, it was all left on the coach! In our dance out spots we collect for our chosen charity and this year it was the Acorn's Children's Hospice, with thanks to our collectors and the public donations, we raised the amazing sum of £247.72 for the charity.

They were pleased with our donation to the charity and thanked us for all our efforts.

Robin Kalinowski, Bag, OWBMM

### **White Hart Morris Men**

2024 was again another busy year for Alcester's White Hart Morris starting with our first dance out on 3rd February and the first Wassail ever in Alcester. Followed by the usual May Day shenanigans and then The Upton-upon-Severn Festival and a tour of Bredon hill and the Crophorne Walkabout, all in May. As well as visiting lovely pubs every Monday evening we also danced - June: Alcester Street Market and The Evesham National Morris Weekend. July: Skulkfest in Ludlow and a Day of Dance in Worcester. August: Shakespeare's DoD Stratford-on-Avon, Saddleworth Rushcart, and the Family Fun day in Alcester. September: Bromyard Festival. October: Our Day of Dance around Evesham and The Alcester 10K Run. December Cardiff Ale. We also managed to attract a new dancer!

Iain Davison

### **Eastern Area Report – Matt Simons**

The past twelve months saw a lot of activity in the eastern region, including two Morris Ring Meetings — in Cambridge and Peterborough respectively — in honour of our 90th anniversary year. A total of nine sides attended the Cambridge Morris Men's Spring Day of Dance on the last (and rather chilly) Saturday in April. This was the third Morris Ring meeting to take place in Cambridge, the last being some 40 years ago. After a full programme of dancing across the city, everybody gathered on Parker's Piece for a sequence of show dances and massed performances. Those assembled were informed that this space had hosted the first known public display of Morris dancing in Cambridge back in 1912, some twelve years before the formation of the Cambridge Morris Men.

It has been wonderful to see the Thaxted Morris Weekend thriving once again under the leadership of Bagman, Rob Evans. Last year's event saw more than 250 dancers and musicians traversing the lanes of rural Essex on five coach tours, before returning to town for the great show in the evening and a feast in the town's magnificent perpendicular church. Four sides from our region were represented: Cambridge, Colchester, Devil's Dyke, and of course the hosts, Thaxted. Apart from meeting up with old friends, it is especially pleasing to see the many new sides appearing at this event for the first time.

After a busy summer, the final Morris Ring meeting of the year took place in Peterborough on 28th September with 14 sides in attendance, of which most were Morris Ring clubs. In addition, we were joined for the afternoon massed show by Raskila, a Lithuanian folk-dance group based in the city, representing just one other strand of Peterborough's rich multicultural community. Another highlight of the day was to see Golden Star Morris formally "dance in" as full members of the Morris Ring with three (!) sets and a band of five performing Oyster Girl, Juniper Hill. Later in the

afternoon, Squires of two other Norwich-based sides, Big Jigs and Kemp's Men, emerged equipped with their staffs of membership for a rare photo opportunity. Three Morris Ring clubs in one city: is there any other city that can rival Norwich?

Of the 18 clubs in the area, 15 are active — maintaining regular programmes throughout the year — one (Good Easter) is active only in midwinter, and two (Blackmore and Chameleonic) are believed to be moribund. Two long-running sides have recently opened up their membership to all, having previously been male only. In the spring of 2024, Greenwich Morris Men transferred to the South East region, which was considered to better reflect their local allegiances.

Matt Simons

Peterborough, January 2025

### **Belchamp Morris, aka Belchamp Molly**

We have had another great year, lots of events, super dancing and brilliant socialising with friends from all over the country. We're just coming to the end of our Molly season of 3 outings, we'll then be morphing back into a Border team.

This year we have gained another three super members: two dancers and a musician. We regularly have 15 on the dance floor at practice and 6 in the band. Happy days, long may they continue. Sad to say, one of our chaps lost his lady wife this summer, but then a baby was born to that family. The circle of life keeps on turning.

### **Big Jigs**

Another busy (for us anyway) year including local dance outs on various evenings with our chums Rumburgh, Kemps Men and Golden Star (from which we draw our membership) and our usual two non-folk festivals – the Strumpshaw Tree Fair and Harlequinn Fair, both in our home county of Norfolk.

The highlight, though, was a few days in September spent dancing in Bosnia and Herzegovina as the guests of Simon Tarrant and Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men. Based in the beautiful town of Trebinji, not far from Dubrovnik, we visited some beautiful places, including a winery in Nudo, Montenegro, another in Strujici (Bosnia), Perast (again in Montenegro) and dancing around the old town in Trebinji. The food was great and very plentiful, and the drink was also great and cheap! Although we got held up at the border on our first visit to Montenegro, we passed the time by dancing on the bridge that marks the actual border, so the musicians were in Bosnia and the dancers in Montenegro! We all had a brilliant time and gained a whole lot of visa stamps in our passports!

Finally, a lot of our members were at the Peterborough Morris Day of Dance [in September] to see Golden Star being presented with their Ring Staff and the chance of a photo with representatives of the three Norwich Ring sides with their staffs.

### **Cambridge Morris Men**

The CMM marked their centenary with a busy programme of events including a Morris Ring meeting and two Travelling Morrice tours to the Cotswolds and North Norfolk respectively. At home, the "local" side benefitted from the addition of four experienced dancers, which permitted us to resume fortnightly pub tours on Friday evenings from May until July. On a few occasions, we

have been able to put up a side with an average age in the low to mid-30s. That said, we continue to rely on the support of dancers whose primary commitment is with another side, meaning that our viability is often still somewhat precarious.

Our two summer tours — under the alias of the Travelling Morrice — attracted a combined total of 44 members. So numerous were we in the Cotswolds that it was necessary to conduct two separate tours in parallel for most of the time, a practice known to the men as bifurcation. The last show of the Cotswolds tour took place in Chipping Campden with the Campden Morris in attendance. Both sides danced well to a sizeable crowd and later adjourned to share supper and ale. Our friendship with the Campden Morris dates back to 1932, so this was a fitting way to end our centenary tour.

### **Colchester Morris**

2024 was the first year of being a mixed side. Throughout the year, we were involved in a range of events, which included dancing for the Stanway Women's Guild, the Rowhedge Albion 20th anniversary celebrations, and Elmstead Market Christmas Fair. On Boxing Day at the Chequers, our father and daughter members performed a jig for the first time, and £460 was raised for the Colchester Toy Library.

We taught Morris dancing to Ardleigh Scouts and Lawford Guides, and the Squire took part in a two person show at St. Leonards Church. We danced at Jimmy's Farm and ran a team building day for a company called Footprint Digital. Additionally, we danced at Colne Engine Spring Fair, attended the Thaxted Morris Weekend, and the Squire and one other member visited Saddleworth Rushcart Festival. This was all in addition to a standard programme of dancing out at a different pub every Friday from May to September, plus our annual day of dance in Colchester and our annual Suffolk tour.

### **Devil's Dyke Morris Men**

This year we have approximately 14 dancers and 2 musicians. We also have associations with a few other dancers whose first commitment is to other sides.

We have either danced out or practiced on 44 Thursdays out of 52. In addition, we danced for several other events including dawn on May Day, Thriplow Daffodil celebrations, Whitsun celebrations in Whaddon, Saddleworth Rushcart, Sheringham Potties festival, a birthday party, two Beaver/Cub scout sessions and the Rutland Morris anniversary Day of Dance. Our Ale was well attended, and we have been represented at about 6 other side's Ales.

Despite our best efforts we have been unable to recruit new men this year, but we have also not lost any. Our age profile has been helped by having 3 under 50s and one in his 50s. Other dancers are generally late 60s to mid-70s. Our range of dances is the usual Cotswold selection, with efforts to learn Ascot and Bucknell to add to our repertoire.

### **Golden Star Morris**

Our 2024 activities culminated in early December with dancing around the fine city of Norwich. We know this event more informally as "The Christmas Shopping Disruption Day"! Into 2025, we are busy honing our repertoire, especially as we have some exciting festival appearances (Upton, Southwell, and Shrewsbury) lined up, as well as training up five new members recruited in

September. Morris Dancing in Norfolk is alive and thriving and the side is looking forward to another great year.

### **Good Easter Molly Gang**

Good Easter Molly Dancers hibernated mostly, emerged for one day on Plough Monday and are now hibernating again until next year.

### **Kemp's Men of Norwich**

Kemp's Men have had another active year including:

- Our usual summer programme of weekly dance outs in Norfolk from May to September
- Day tours: Norwich and Cromer on May Day, (where we were delighted that both the Lord Mayor and the Dean of Norwich Cathedral joined our dancing); back to Cromer for a pre-Christmas jingle of bells; and our traditional Mummers play on Boxing Day.
- We have danced at a number of community events and attended days of dance at Halesworth and Cambridge.
- Our Whit Tour of the Cotswolds was extremely successful as was our annual tour in August with the incomparable Knots of May to entertain the good people of Suffolk.

This autumn, we have been pleased to welcome another new dancer after he saw us dance in the summer. One of our new recruits from last year, who has quickly become an accomplished dancer, is now adding musician to his repertoire (oh to be young again!). We have an active website, Facebook page and in October joined the merry throng on BlueSky. This year will be planning the celebrations for our 70th anniversary [in 2026].

Finally, it is with sadness that we report the very recent passing of former Kemp's Squire, Richard Woodham, who, though no longer dancing with us, remained a beloved member of the side and who will be sadly missed.

### **Mayflower Morris Men**

It has been another fairly normal year with the usual annual events, regular Thursday evening pub stops, and two performances of our mummers play. We lost one of our oldest dancers, who decided to hang up his bells, and also the youngest member of the side who moved up North. We picked up an experienced dancer from Blackmore who have all but folded. We held two taster sessions but did not pick up any potential dancers.

### **Peterborough Morris**

Our first event after the ARM in 2024 was the Cambridge Morris Men's Spring Day of Dance [and Morris Ring Meeting] in April. We did our usual dancing at dawn on May Day in Peterborough and our season of 17 pub nights kicked off in mid-May. We shared pub nights with Bourne Borderers, Crosskey Clog, Fenstanton Morris, Pig Dyke Molly, Rutland Morris and Sutton Masque.

Festivals we danced at included Straw Bear Festival, Potty Morris Festival, Ely Folk Festival, Oundle Fringe Festival, John Clare Festival, World Conker Championships and Whitby Folk Week — the last being a highlight for us. Our annual Day of Dance in September was a walking tour of Peterborough which 12 invited sides also attended. Our numbers have been a bit down this year, mainly due to older members retiring,

### **Rutland Morris**

2024 was an important year for Rutland Morris as it was our 50th anniversary, which we marked with several successful events, and also because we are now open to all, not just men. We danced around Uppingham on the exact anniversary of the day the side was formed, including outside the former pub where the founder members met. The pub is now part of Uppingham School where a certain Cecil Sharp was a pupil. Our celebratory dinner in July brought together members old and new for good food, beer and memories. We also held our 50th anniversary day of dance on 12th October, which was attended by nearly 140 dancers and musicians from 10 sides. It was so good that many old friends could join us on the day. The rest of 2024 was also action-packed, dancing in 38 locations in and around Rutland with other highlights including Whittlesea Straw Bear festival, our club holiday in Cyprus, the JMO meeting in Newark, Rutland CAMRA beer festival, Bedford day of dance, Peterborough Morris day of dance, and Lincoln 'BIG' Morris.

In terms of numbers, Rutland Morris is pretty much the same as last year with a band of 3–6 musicians depending on availability (some are dual registered), and up to 18 dancers, again depending on availability and also fitness. We had 3 new members join us in 2024 primarily via our 'Have a Go' Morris workshop, which was great, but we also have several members suffering illness and a group who are ageing gracefully, so we need to keep recruiting in order to keep roughly the same numbers. We are repeating the workshop this January with the aim to attract more new members. Best wishes from Rutland Morris to all the area sides for a successful and enjoyable 2025.

### **Thameside Mummers**

The Thameside Mummers are still just about surviving. Our local membership is down to only 6, but we can call on 2 or 3 more if heading north (Suffolk). Plays have been modified, parts doubled up and a bit of amending of some of the less palatable speeches. We managed a reasonable number of gigs last year — mainly festivals or pub events and the like, plus our ever-popular Mummer's Camp. Good Christmas with very successful Boxing Day, our 49th consecutive year at our local pub in Leigh on Sea. We collected nearly £800 for Mind charity over festive season. I don't think Mumming is what people want for many events nowadays — thinking the jingoistic nature is not always welcome at fetes, etc. Our once-famous 3 course annual dinner is now fish and chips and a few beers in a local pub. Hopefully we'll be here for next year.

Roland Wouters (Kemp's Men), Emma Shear-Elliott (Golden Star) and Steve Hickling (Big Jigs) with their respective staffs shortly after Golden Star received theirs at Peterborough DoD in Sept '24



## **Northern Area Report – Darren Nugent**

**Barnsley Longsword** – no report

**Great Yorkshire Morris** - no report.

### **Green Oak Morris Men (Doncaster)**

Green Oak Morris Men are a men only side based in Doncaster City in South Yorkshire. We have been dancing since 1971 and have been based in various places in and around Doncaster. Our current base is the Doncaster Brewery Tap on Young Street, we practice in the upstairs bar from 7.45 to 9.30pm on Wednesdays.

The membership is around 30 but only 9 are current dancers, 4 are musicians, 1 is both dancer and musician. We mostly dance Cotswold with a couple of Border and a Longsword dance. We perform a Mummers play around Christmas in various pubs in the area. We have had 2 new members join in 2024 and one a couple of years ago and we hope to get them dancing in 2025. Obviously, we are keen to get more new people.

We are hoping to do a Wassail in 2025. We will have a day of dance in the spring and be dancing out in various pubs over the summer as usual. We will be holding some more “Give it a go nights” during the year.

Website – <https://greenoakmorrismen.weebly.com/>

FB page – <https://www.facebook.com/groups/169869206912>

Email – [greenoakdoncaster@gail.com](mailto:greenoakdoncaster@gail.com)

Telephone – 07710 229915

**Grimsby Morris** - no report

### **Handsworth Traditional Sword Dancers**

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

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

We are also on Facebook and Instagram.

### **Harthill Morris**

Harthill Morris have 26 active members – 9 musicians, 15 dancers, an animal and an occasional fool. Some of the musicians also have a dance or two up their sleeves for resilience. So, we are in a healthy position. We have three new members (two dancers, one musician) and lost one member to Wath Morris (Grrrr!!). Sadly, the legendary Dennis Finbow (dancer, and Silversmith who created the amazing Harthill Morris regalia) passed away this year. We mainly dance Cotswold. The Harthill Morris Big Band includes violins, accordion, melodions, concertina, and a beer stick.

We practice on Thursday nights, September – April, in Harthill Village Hall, Whinney Hill, Harthill, Sheffield. Details can be found at [harthillmorris.org.uk](http://harthillmorris.org.uk) or the Harthill Morris Facebook page.



We have finalised our 2025 schedule and look forward to ten Thursday evenings at different public houses throughout the Summer, performing in the village of Harthill at it's Well Dressing Festival and Carnival, as well as the Doncaster Day of Dance (hosted by Green Oak Morris), the Thaxted weekend, the Buxton Day of Dance, and the Lincoln Big Morris.

Cheers.

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

### **Lord Conyers Morris Men**

We are a male dancing side with mixed musicians. We have 18 members. We have two fiddles, a whistle, a new concertina player, and the occasional accordion, drum and bass drum. Lord Conyers Morris Men are mainly a Cotswold side but also perform our own Longsword. We practice on Wednesday evenings at The Duke of Leeds, 16 Church Street, Wales Sheffield, S26 5LQ.

Last Summer we performed at the Evesham Morris weekend and in early August 2024 we attended our annual pilgrimage up to Robin Hoods Bay. Blessed with fine weather, it was an extremely enjoyable weekend. And in September we danced as part of the Bromley Folk Festival.

A notable success was retaining our "sword dancing as a second language" champion status at the SDU competition in October.

We also performed our traditional Christmas Wassail & Abbots Bromley Horn Dance on Saturday 21st December.

For 2025 we will be branding our performance season as a 50th anniversary tour. We will perform the horn dance again on May Eve and then dancing at dawn on May Morning, and we will return again to Robin Hoods Bay and Bromyard.

Email address: lordconyers@gmail.com

Website: www.lordconyers.org.uk

Regards,

Peter Yendley, Secretary, Lord Conyers Morris Men

### **Spen Valley Longsword – no report**

### **Wath Morris**

We have recruited 5 new dancers and 4 new musicians in the past year - all but two were recruited after as a result of our Christmas programme (2023) and membership leaflets. We now have 27 members in the side – 17 dancers, 8 musicians, 1 both dancer and musician, and a mumming character. We are a mixed side with 17 men and 10 women, and dance Bledington (Cotswold) (mostly summer), Border (mostly winter), Sword, Mumming (mostly Winter). Our band include a melodeon, 2 fiddles, 2 flutes, 2 percussion, and 2 concertina. We practice on Tuesday Evenings from the last week in September until the last week in April at Wath Rugby Club, Moor Road, Wath, S63 7RS

www.wath-morris.co.uk

Facebook: Wath Morris Group & Wath Morris Page

Plans for 2025:

8th Feb: Lupercalia day of dance in Billingley Village followed by evening feast

14-16 March: Whitby Family Weekend – dancing in Whitby and Robin Hood’s Bay  
2-4 May: Wath Festival  
30 May – 1 Jun: Thaxted Weekend  
14 June: Pretty Villages Tour of South Yorkshire (Family day)  
5-7 Sept: Bainbridge Family Weekend dancing in Wensleydale & Swaledale  
Most Tuesdays May to July, Tuesday evening dance outs (some with local teams)

The team is undergoing change. We sadly lost one of our long-term members and ex bagman, Alec Lowe. Three of our older members are now doing much less dancing and one of these has retired from dancing though is still “The Doctor” in The Street Mummers Play.

Our new members are slowly learning the core dances of the team. We do not tend to change our set of dances and only dance the Bedington tradition and the collected Border Morris dances. Some of the more difficult Bledington dances have been absent from our shows for a couple of years but we are planning to bring them back into the repertoire this year.

We regularly perform the Flamborough Sword Dance throughout the year, but the Arkengarthdale dance has “lain fallow” for a year to be re-introduced again this year.

We perform the Street Mummers Play (Street is a hamlet just outside Wath where it was performed until the early 1900’s) and have plans to re-introduce the Peshaw Pitman’s Play (and 4-man sword dance) back into our repertoire this year.

Regards,  
Tim Binns, Wath Morris Bagman

### **Wakefield Morris**

We are a mixed North-West morris side and over the last few years, have really become a family side where we are fortunate to currently have 7 dancers under the age of 16. All are related to other members in the side, and we can boast most relationships – mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, granddaughter, aunt, uncle, sister, cousin, daughter, son, daughter in law and mother-in-law. There are just nine members in the side who are not related to anyone else in the team.

We have had 5 new regular members join us in September 2024 and one guest member who has returned to join us at our Sunday practices, having completed her university course. This brings our current membership to 30. 7 are musicians only, 2 are both dancers and musicians, 21 are dancers only.

Our regular weekly practice night is on a Monday evening from 7.30 – 9.00 pm at The Kings Way Methodist Church Hall in Ossett, Wakefield, WF5 8ET. We also hold several Sunday afternoon practices throughout the practice season (September to June) when we welcome experienced dancers and musicians who may not be able to join us on a Monday evening.

Our website address is [wakefieldmorris.com](http://wakefieldmorris.com) and we are active on Facebook.

Website [wakefieldmorris.com](http://wakefieldmorris.com)  
Facebook Wakefield Morris  
Email [wakefieldmorris@googlemail.com](mailto:wakefieldmorris@googlemail.com)

After a busy year last year which included dancing at the Sidmouth Folk Festival, we are busy gearing up for the next season and looking forward to various events, including the Rhubarb

Festival in Wakefield in February, our 10th Ossett Beercart Festival and the Whitby Folk Festival in August.

Hazel Parker

### **White Rose Morris**

We had a successful 2024, the side has been stronger since the restrictions of COVID eased. The details below are for the active side, we have quite a few dormant or distant members, who still consider themselves members but don't dance regularly with us. We have had one new member since January 2024. The total number of members is 22 (including two junior members): 15 are dancers only; all our musicians can dance, though one is predominantly a musician; 6 others both dance and play; we have no non-dancers.

We are a men's Cotswold team, currently dancing Oddington, Bampton and Fartown (our own tradition). Current instruments played by our musicians are Melodeon, English concertina and French Horn. We practice every Wednesday except holidays from September to April and dance out on Wednesdays in May, June and July. We practice at: Move at HD1 Studios, 5 St John's Road, Huddersfield. HD1 5AY

Website: [whiterosemorrismen.org.uk](http://whiterosemorrismen.org.uk) or <http://nicksites.net/WhiteRose/>

Facebook White Rose Morris

In 2025 we will continue our usual local Wednesday evening performances in the Summer and will be attending a number of other events and festivals including Humberfest, Todmorden FF, Whaddon Whit Festival and Whitby Folk Week, where we will also be running the Cliff Barstow Jog Competition.

Dan.

### **SE Area Report – Lewis Elliot**

This year I have had the pleasure of visiting many sides in the South East area of the Morris Ring. They have all made me feel very welcome whether I was visiting them on a practice evening, on a midweek dance out, or joining them for a tour. It has been an absolute joy to get out and join sides whenever I have had the chance to.

The overall state of morris in the South East is healthy, though we all have the same challenges to face regarding recruitment. Unfortunately, the ongoing challenge of recruitment has led to two sides shutting up shop: East Surrey Morris Men and Woodchurch Morris Men. Through having spoken to the sides in my area, I know that it is possible to do all the right things and still not have anyone new come through the door. This can be demoralising, but I'd always encourage people to carry on carrying on and hope for better weather – though, sometimes, the weather does not change in your favour. We can only try our best.

There has been an increase in the number of mixed sides in the South East. This has brought some fantastic people into the morris, though it has also meant that sometimes established dancers have had to change sides as they have a preference for single-sex-sides. Change is not always easy, but there is enough variety in the South East to accommodate everyone's preferences.

As a final note to this brief report, I'd just like to thank all the sides whom I visited for accommodating me and being such wonderful fun. It has been a pleasure.

And now the reports:

### **Hartley Morris Men**

Hartley Morris Men exited 2024 much as we had entered it - enthusiastic and keen with slightly aching joints but sufficient numbers to see us enter our 73rd year.

We enjoyed a busy 2024 which commenced with a tour based in Coalport, Shropshire and then saw us, amongst other things, at the Victory Day of Dance, on our annual Shepherd Neame Tour, as always at Broadstairs Folk Week, at (sadly) the last Tenterden Folk Festival, aboard three narrowboats on the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal and on our fifth Gallon of Ale Tour. In between we managed to dance out every Thursday evening to, generally, appreciative audiences.

Our numbers are, on the whole, good; we have 17 regular dancers and 5 musicians and a number of regional members who join us if and when they are able. Like all sides we are very keen to recruit, we didn't gain any new members this year but with the sad demise of Woodchurch Morris we are optimistic that we may increase our numbers.

2025 looks promising, with a trip already planned to West Yorkshire, including a day out in Manchester, we have an Ale booked for June and a number of other events in the pipeline.

Whilst we are getting a little older we continue, for medicinal purposes, to imbibe the finest ales Kent has to offer and we find this rejuvenates us to the point that there is still plenty of life left in the side. We look forward to what 2025 has to offer.

### **Bald of Guv'nors**

The Bald of Guv'nors staggered into existence in February 2024, after a meeting in a pub in South East London and were immediately offered a rehearsal space at said hostelry. Being largely retired gentlemen and young professional musicians, we elected to practice on afternoons. We have no Foreman; we all contribute to teaching the dances (this works better than you might imagine). Nobody is a Squire for more than two hours (Squire indicated by the wearing of "The Governor" a heavy brass model which helps contribute to some light bruising)

Incorporating brand new dances in the Cotswold tradition as well as dances learned from previous teams, the repertoire has grown steadily, as has the confidence of the team. We had several enjoyable dance outs- including a tour of Leicester with Anstey Morris, a tour of Herne Hill in London and a notably enjoyable day at the Carshalton Day of Dance.

We're looking forward to increasing our profile in 2025 with more tours and appearances with other sides.

### **Kingston Spring Grove Morris**

Kingston Spring Grove Morris had another positive year, overall, albeit one where occasionally low numbers and the weather played their part in preventing us from going out and dancing quite as much as we would have liked to. Those events we did attend were well received by the audience and were great fun. Those where we danced with other sides, as well as a new event for us (at a local residents' association May party), were especially enjoyable.

Our plan for the practice season is to:

- Polish those dances we already do confidently (focusing especially on the finer details that really bring the dancing together)
- Introduce those dances to our newer dancers that they haven't yet done
- Introduce some new Fieldtown and Adderbury dances to everybody

In that way, although we did still roll out our dances four at times in 2024, our plan should mean that we will be able to consistently perform them for six again next year, and with our newest recruit proving himself to be a natural, we can look forward to 2025.

### **Taylor's Morris**

This year numbers have been steady, with a committed core group of dancers and musicians and we have had a couple of new members join this season. As well as dancing at a couple of festivals and other events, Taylor's Morris had a good weekend dancing for the International Pipe and Tabor Festival, held at the Folk in Gloucester. On Sunday, Taylor's held an open practice in Gloucester and had a well-attended Longborough Workshop. This season Taylor's have also started to hold practices in Birmingham, as well as London, to make it easier for people from a wider geographical area to be able to learn the Longborough tradition and dance out.

### **Wantsum Morris men**

2024 has been another successful year. We danced out at all our usual haunts and a couple of new ones. Some strange people even gave us money for it!!!

We were blessed with the weather all year, especially at Broadstairs Folk Week where we gained three teenagers. One is still coming to practice and is progressing remarkably well. The other two are being drip fed, softly, softly (we'll get them in the end!!!) We also gained an experience dancer too who has now fully come into the fold.

All in all, it's been a fun year, and we are looking to do more in 2025.

### **Greenwich Morris Report on 2024**

2024 was a busy and enjoyable year for Greenwich Morris. We danced at dawn on May Day and were out pretty well every week from then on until returning in October to Mycenae House for practice every Thursday evening. We've danced with our friends North Wood, Ravensbourne, Dacre and Old Palace Clog and Blackheath, at venues ranging from Surrey Docks Farm, where we entertained an audience of curious Nubian goats, to a very posh hotel around the corner from Buckingham Palace, where we entertained an audience of curious American tourists.

We are fortunate to be based in a World Heritage Site, with great spots for dancing – by the Cutty Sark (ship), in the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich Park, and the Cutty Sark (pub). Other sides enjoy visiting and we had a very successful 'At Home' in the summer. We've noticed that the season is extending so that we're dancing almost all year round, with the Charlton House Horn Fair in October and the Wassail in East Greenwich Pleasaunce in January.

Sadly, Ged, who has danced with and played his concertina for the side for decades, has had to retire due to ill health. We are very grateful to Christine for playing for us now. One of our newer members, Marty, is learning the melodeon, and already plays for us to dance, as does Colin the

Squire (when there are enough of us, so he doesn't have to dance) and Alan, on his lovely English concertina.

We are always keen for people to join. Sometimes numbers have been so low that we've had to do four-man dances. But we have recruited three new members over the last couple of years. One, Adam, knows the mysteries of the internet and things digital, so our social media presence has improved – we have one now. Topo, Britain's only – we think – Javanese Morris dancer, is a valued though wayward member; we are keen for the side to become more diverse. Dave, our Foreman, has recently returned from a long sojourn in Australia, so the standard of dancing is on the rise. After a few lean years things are looking up!

### **The Men of Wight**

We have another new recruit this autumn - Sarah - and she has learned very quickly and danced out with us on the Saturday before Christmas in Newport Square and on Boxing Day at Arretton Barns when all the Islands Sides meet to dance. We are now able to get two Sides up for our more core dances and the Side is in as good a shape - indeed better than for many a year. We don't travel that well but did get a Side to Thaxted last year. Sadly, we lost one of our founder members (Brian Reves) this year although he had not danced with the Side on a regular basis due to both health issues and other commitments.

Our next event is Sunday Lunch at the Waverley in Carrisbrooke - open to all morris sides (Sunday March 23rd if you fancy a visit). In the summer (date yet to be fixed) we will have a day tour by bus after a successful venture last year. We will be at the Longstone on May 1<sup>st</sup> again. I had intended to come to the ARM but sadly it clashes with a show I am working at in Kettering.

Finally, we feel that drinking a toast to Cecil Sharp should be dropped as there were many involved in preserving morris and Cecil Sharp was in it as a business. Not decrying his work but we feel there are others that should also be recognised and personally Lionel Bacon's "Black book" has been my guide for the last 50 years. We would suggest a toast to everyone working towards keeping morris as a living tradition. - just our thoughts.

### **Chanctonbury Ring Morris (report edited due to space constraints, full report available on request)**

Our dancing season 2023/2024 presented us with some memorable events including our 70th Anniversary Dinner, hosting the Fools and Beasts 2023 weekend, a tour based around the 700 bus and celebrating Knots of Mays 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The work we put in during the practice season rewarded us with a season of improved dancing and – I hope – more enjoyment.

Several of us have started to sing after practice. The Henfield Club has proven to be very welcoming and supportive, and I hope that the enjoyment of singing will grow and once again become embedded in the Side. We've actually had more music and singing sessions after dancing this year; they have been most enjoyable for those of us who have stayed, but not many of us are taking part. Room for growth here.

Change of Bag. Jason stood down from the Bagging role and Chris took over the reins. Frequently we have been tight on numbers since the retirement of two Men due to declining fitness. One of whom has happily been promoted to the role of Green Man. But we have been dancing well.

Reports from happy audiences have included complimentary comments such as “you do put on a good show” and “you do look as if you are enjoying yourselves”. These are valuable and important comments.

So, where do we go from here? Well, consolidation of our core dances is always necessary, of course. Numbers and skills are often tight so we could do with another couple of six-man dances in our repertoire. We, and our audiences, have enjoyed Skirmish; an additional fun dance would be good for us. And we must remember to enjoy ourselves.

Finally, a ship’s captain can take a ship nowhere without a crew. Similarly, this is true of a Morris Squire; I would like to register my appreciation of all the commitment and effort freely given by all the Men. That is especially true of the musicians, who loyally turn out every week so that we can have fun: of the Captain, who so patiently strives to install reliable skills into our unwilling brains: to the Bagging team, who have overcome numerous challenges this year to ensure that we and the outside world know what we are doing: and to the long-suffering Treasurer, who quietly ensures that we have a nice hall to practice in and occasionally buys us all beers.

Thank you.

LGB Sept 24

### **Ravensbourne Morris Men**

With our Squire and Bagman, Andrew Shotten and John Callaghan well into the second year of their respective office, we are now beginning to look at how we can improve recruitment opportunities. I know every side is probably asking the same question, but there is no “one answer fits all”

However, we have been fortunate in attracting another, very new member, whom we hope will enjoy his time with us. That gives us four new members in the last three years, and another wishing to join in September this coming September when current commitments finish...

We had a regular dance programme from May to the end of July, with only the unexpected success of our national football team causing two dancing nights to be cancelled. During our programme period, we supported Westminster in their Day of Dance and also attended the Thaxted weekend, and we thank both sides for their invitation. Since September, Ravensbourne have attended the Hop Hoodening in Canterbury and had a tour, with guests, to support one of our members having a “significant” birthday.

We performed mumming plays on two successive weeks before Christmas and for the first time sang carols in a pub in Bromley North to help raise funds for St Christopher’s, our local hospice. Our Boxing Day dancing saw the usual large crowd of 300-400 people at the Greyhound in Keston. Due to an unexpected turn of events, which saw the normal venue for our wassailing closed, we had to rearrange to an alternative venue for our annual Wassail in the New Year, and so returned to the Greyhound. I don’t think the landlord knew what to expect, but the evening was a great success.

We have a full programme of Tuesday evening spots as well as looking to attend as guests at various weekend events. All in all, we are looking forward to 2025.

### **Ewell St Mary’s Morris Men**

Ewell St Mary's Morris Men continues its tradition of only male dancers but have sadly lost one of our founder members who has moved away, although he may return for special occasions. One recent joiner danced in on our St George's day tour. ESMMM has 18 members including three musicians and three dancers who also play occasionally.

This leaves some concern about the long-term future of the side as we are not currently able to maintain our numbers. To address this, we held two taster sessions in an attempt to boost numbers. One in September had been widely advertised locally was gate-crashed by another local side and was not productive. The second was promoted at our pre-Christmas wassails and Boxing Day tour has been more productive with one new member coming to practice (and planning to continue) and another staying in contact and is planning to come to future practices. The targeted approach seems to have been more productive.

2024 had a programme of regular evening dance-outs through the summer. Our own normal events (St George's Day, our own day of dance, pre-Christmas wassails and Boxing Day tour with Mummers' play) were well attended, but we were frequently short on numbers to attend other sides' events."

### **Long Man Morris**

Long Man Morris are now ticking over nicely. We have 19 dancers, 2 core musicians and 3 support musicians so all is good. We have found a new venue for our wassail, The Ram at Firle, which was excellent. I have to say wassail venues aren't easy to find! We are now running Sussex Day in Lewes together with the Old Ale and our Eastbourne Seafront Walking tour. The only casualty last year was our carol service which was cancelled by the new owners of the pub. So the search for another 'carols' venue begins. All in all, it was another good year for Long Man Morris.

### **King John's Morris Men**

King John's Morris Men took advantage of about twenty five dancing opportunities in 2024, including our day of dance in April, with guests from Dartington and Plymouth (and a certain somewhat flamboyant Scotsman), our usual May Morning dancing at the Bargate, Southampton's mediaeval gateway, with Red Stags Morris, a number of local fêtes and the New Forest Folk Festival (we are the opening act, with dancing, a mummers' play and a sing-around, and run morris workshops), together with pub nights, mostly on Thursdays, meeting Winchester, Bourne River, Red Stags and Sarum.

Before Christmas, our mummers' play appeared at numerous local venues and was also performed on Boxing Day, where we traditionally perform Border dances – to an audience of at least 250 in the somewhat limited confines of the narrow road outside the Vine in Bursledon. Our Christmas collections will result in a donation to a local prostate cancer support charity of at least £1300. We also ran a further eight music and song sessions in the early and later parts of the year. As with many sides, we need to recruit more dancers, especially given that 2025 will mark fifty years since King John's were founded. Various events to mark this anniversary are planned.

### **Victory Morris Men**

Well, the now-nearly-old-enough-to-be-traditional Victory Morris have been up to many of their usual shenanigans this year:



Our main event was our Annual Day of Dance, which once again took place in Southsea and Gosport and was very well attended - this event has become very popular over the last few years, and we hope to carry on with it - put the date in your diaries for 2025 - **Saturday 12th July**.

We also attended Kennet MM ale, and made our usual trip to Broadstairs Folk Week, both of which were most enjoyable, plus in September we spent a day in London bothering the good people of Belgravia - who were suitably appalled.

We gained a couple of new and keen dancers this year, and although we still have slight concerns about the number and availability of our long-suffering musicians, we look to have gained a new person this autumn, so hopefully that will help.

Generally, a good year, and we are now starting to plan for our 50th anniversary in 2026.

However, the sad news is that one of our long-standing members Alan Glock passed away suddenly on 18th January aged 86 Alan joined the side in 1999, and was a regular member for many years, a dancer, singer, prolific songwriter and all-round 'good egg'. He was the most hospitable of men, a good friend for many years, and will be sorely missed.



### **Woodchurch Morris Men**

We are sad to report that, in August, Woodchurch Morris closed its books, waved its last clout and jingled its last bell. Tenterden Folk Festival was, fittingly perhaps, our last day out, down to five dancers again and muddling along with some very welcome help. As with many sides we have found it very difficult to grow and replace lost numbers in sufficient quantity.

There are many people to thank, previous members, fellow sides, dancers and musicians, pubs and publicans, event organisers and friends, far too many to mention individually. You know who you are.

We had an arrangement to put up a Christmas tree in the church which we honoured; the bag shall go to The Pilgrim's Hospice in honour of our splendid departed fellow morris man. The AGM we had was a rather sombre one with some of the usual disagreements, but also one tinged with jollity and we all agreed that over the years we have had the most tremendous fun.

Also, it was with great sadness that we announced that our valued fellow team member and friend, Richard Fair, passed away on Monday 24th June after a short illness. Richard was one of the longest standing members of the side and a true stalwart. His skill, humour, knowledge, singing and range of songs will accompany us no more. We shall all miss him terribly.

### **Buckland Shag Morris**

No report as yet received.

(Note from area rep: I have had the great pleasure to visit Buckland Shag twice this year (at Buckland and Godstone). They are a youthful energetic side who dance with vim and vigour, and I'd recommend getting out to see them if you can.)

### **Ashdown Forest Morris Men**

No report as yet received.

(Note from area rep: I was very grateful to John Walden who gave me a lift to Markbeech last year so that I could visit Ashdown Forest MM, It was a very pleasant May evening, and the locals had come out in force to watch the morris. What is there to beat morris dancing in the English countryside outside a local pub?)

### **Broadwood Morris Men**

No report as yet received.

(Note from area rep: I was very pleased to be able to visit the Broadwood Day of Dance for the second year in row in 2024. Unfortunately, I was slightly damaged and was using a stick to walk at the time. Thank you to Trevor who is currently acting as guardian of my duck handled stick after I became forgetful through beer and left it behind – beer really does cure all ills! It was a cracking day in Horsham, and I thoroughly recommend it to anyone who hasn't been (it often falls on the same day as Westminster's Day of Dance, which is why I haven't been more often). I look forward to returning in 2025.

### **East Surrey Morris Men**

No report as yet received.

(Note from area rep: I was very sorry to hear earlier this year that East Surrey had made the decision to cease practicing and begin to wind up. This is especially sad, as they are one of the founding sides of the Morris Ring. Fortunately, since they made their decision, I have still been able to watch them dance out.

I attended East Surrey's final Peasmarsh Weekend, which was an absolute joy – I believe that another side who attended the weekend (Black Swan Border Morris) intend to take it over. I then had the pleasure of seeing East Surrey again at the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary Morris Ring event that Nigel organised around Cecil Sharp House. And I was also lucky enough to see East Surrey dance again just before Christmas with Black Swan Border Morris at The Hope in Carshalton.

East Surrey are a beautiful side to watch, and I have always been especially entertained by their performance of dances in the Sherborne tradition. I wonder if I shall have the chance to watch them again. I hope so.)

### **North Wood Morris Men**

No report as yet received.

(Note from area rep: I have had the good fortune to see North Wood (usually accompanied by North Wood Way) dance out several times this year. I visited their Days of Dance in both May and December, as well as seeing them at the Croydon Night of Dance. Other than the company of the jovial individuals who comprise North Wood, one of the things that has impressed me most is the camaraderie that North Wood have with other local sides – such as Greenwich Morris, Madder Mill

Molly, and Old Palace Clog. There is a real sense of being involved in a shared experience, and that we're all in it together – no matter what your gender, or what organisation you belong to. North Wood personify the sense of bonhomie.)

### **Thames Valley Morris**

No report as yet received.

(Note from the area rep: I have been lucky enough to see Thames Valley several times in the last year. First during the West Somerset Weekend that I attended with Greensleeves in April (it was decidedly chilly), later at the Ewell St Mary's Morris Men Day of Dance in July, then at the Croydon Night of Dance in August, and finally at a very chilly dance out with Kingston Spring Grove and Pheonix Clog in December. Thames Valley are a mixed side now and seem to be doing very well for it. They are a lovely side to meet up with and always leave audiences smiling.)

### **Winchester Morris Men**

No report as yet received.

(Note from area rep: As I type this, I am already salivating thinking of the upcoming Winchester Feast. I did see Winchester out this year performing in Saddleworth, but, other than their feast, that was the only time I was able to meet up with them. I must try harder! Winchester continue to perform to the high level of excellence for which they are renown, and I look forward to seeing them dance again in 2025.)

### **Stourvale Mummers**

No report as yet received.

(Note from the area rep: Stourvale are currently having an intermission, but I'd like to note that they have lost an important part of their family: Alf Woodall. Alfie Woodall, late Foreman of Bourne River Morris and Doctor of the Stourvale Mummers was held on the morning of Friday Dec 13th 2024. He shall be missed.)

### **The World-Famous Ashdown Mummers**

No report as yet received.

(Note from area rep: The World-Famous Ashdown Mummers were not out this Christmas past, but I hope that 2025 shall be kinder to them and they shall once more bring the festive spirit out with them once more.)

### **(Insert Name Here) Mummers**

No report as yet received.

(Note from area rep: well, I'm not really that surprised... They spend most of their time eating sprouts.

### **St Nicholas-at-Wade with Sarre Hoodeners**

No report as yet received.

(Note from area rep – I have made a tentative sort of contact with St Nicholas-at-Wade with Sarre Hoodeners, and look forward to the day when I am able stalk them to their natural hunting grounds.

### **Blackheath Morris Men**

Blackheath remain South East London's premiere dance and joke collective. We have had the chance to entertain audiences both locally and in far flung corners of England this year (York! Northampton! Nottingham!). We continue to survive and are attempting to tempt poor misguided waifs and strays in the South East area of London to join us. We are a fine body of men (and Jill)!

### **Greensleeves Morris Men (report edited due to space constraints, full report available on request)**

Practices continued on Friday evenings at South Wimbledon Community Centre, with attendance generally around eight or nine musicians and dancers. The Sultan continued to receive our post-practice custom (and for some pre-practice custom).

The Sultan also hosted our monthly Sunday evening music sessions, ably publicised by Tim who also acted as gatekeeper, with the running of the sessions shared between Roy Fenton and Chris Benson. Attendance has remained strong, with many excellent and enjoyable performances. On-line participation, introduced during covid, was however eventually discontinued due to lack of uptake.

The number of dances performed throughout the year rose significantly this year, from 242 in 2022-23 to exactly 300. The number of individual dances was also up, from 30 to 37, from 12 traditions, possibly reflecting the fact that, given the sad lack of new recruits, we have taken the opportunity to recover some of the breadth of our former repertoire. As usual the latter number is inflated by traditions represented by just one dance (Eynsham, North Skelton, Longborough, Minster Lovell and "Weston-Super-Mare", i.e. Twin Sisters) and Wheatley Processional, traditionally performed at the Mermaid during the Peasmarsh weekend.

Bonny Green Garters (Bampton) retains its position as our most-performed dance, largely because it gets performed multiple times on days of dance (e.g. seven times during the Peasmarsh weekend), with Greensleeves this year pushing The Rose into third place. Constant Billy, Old Woman, Blue-Eyed Stranger and Young Collins have slipped down the table, while Vandals and Country Gardens have climbed. Dances revived or introduced during the year, albeit with only one or two performances each, included Skirmish and Banks of the Dee (both Fieldtown), Trunkles (Minster Lovell), Brighton Camp (Eynsham), Banbury Bill (Bampton), and Old Black Joe, Queen's Delight, Bonny Green and Saturday Night (all Bucknell). Willow Tree went from a lowly 16<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **North Wood Morris Report 2024**

North Wood Morris, Croydon's own side, had a very busy year of dancing at forty-six different events over the year around Surrey, Kent and London. In March 2024 after a long illness Douglas Hand, a long-time member died. His death is a great loss to the team and we miss him.

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

At the end of July, we attended and danced at Brian Collins' memorial service at the Highgate URC. Brian was our musician for many years and our Squire and is greatly missed. As befitting a professional musician, the service was well attended by many people, full of fine music, some composed by him and performed by those who knew him well.

In August we danced at the yearly Croydon night of Dance with many other sides. Over the year we had invites from other teams to join them for dance outs. In December, we organised our annual Christmas DOD tour along the London's South Bank with guest sides. We danced at the Christmas Riverside Market where we had permission to dance. After lunch in the Borough market, we danced at two more pubs before returning home. The weather was very cold for our final tour of the year on Boxing Day, dancing at a local pub with a good appreciative crowd which also joined in. North Wood, as with so many other teams, needs new members. It is proving hard to recruit despite trying so many different methods, so we started up a mixed side called North Wood Way Morris. They now have some women members and hope this will continue to bring in more new members to both sides. In 2025 North Wood Morris celebrates 50 years of dancing as Croydon's own Morris dancers. No one would have ever thought that after performing a Morris dance at a Scout Folk event in 1975 we would still be dancing fifty years later.

At end of August 2025 to celebrate our Anniversary year we are organising our usual three-day DODweekend with guest sides dancing in France around Calais and at a rural museum where we will have a lovely meal and beers before dancing in the big Cite Europe shopping centre. The next day we will drive along the coast to Boulogne-sur-Mer to dance in the Old Town and finish the weekend with a meal before returning to England. North Wood welcome any dancers who would like to join them on this weekend.

#### **NE Area Report – Nick Appleyard**

##### **Redcar Sword Dancers**

2024 was a pretty good year for dancing out in comparison with the last few years. We managed to put in an appearance at four events - Leeds Morris Men's Dales Tour in May, Jet Set Border Morris's 25th Anniversary Day of Dance in June, Saltburn Folk Festival in August and the Sword Dance Union's Longsword Tournament in November. We also turned out on Boxing Day for the 58th time at Greatham, near Hartlepool, to perform the traditional dance and play from that village.

We took a decision during the year to become a mixed side, which resulted in us gaining two new members who should be dancing out with us in 2025.

Regards

Brian

##### **Benfieldside Morris and Sword**

Regular Wednesday practices continued successfully over winter together with the Durham Rams, leading to our summer pub tours which were well received though not always by large crowds! Our group of new recruits took to practice with enthusiasm and danced out all through the summer.

We danced with Richmond on Swale at the Richmond Mayfest at early spring bank holiday and later in the month at Sedgfield Fair. Again, some of us joined the Durham Rams on the Leeds Morris Dales Tour at the late spring bank holiday.

In June we braved Thaxted for the second year running and again had a superb weekend. July and August were a little limited because of family holidays getting in the way! Hostilities resumed in the Autumn, and we spent another great weekend with Whitchurch Morris dancing around Aylesbury.

The new year began, as usual, with Plough Sunday. The weather proved kind although the temperature didn't rise above freezing! We danced on Palace Green in Durham in front of the Cathedral joined by Black Diamond Morris from Darlington. The plough was led into the cathedral by the Dean and blessed. A side of our newest dancers danced "Bean Setting" as an offertory dance and largesse was given to and accepted by our youngest member, Axel on behalf of the side. The plough then found its way to the market place where there was more dancing to a fairly good crowd.

Brian Pollard, Bagman

### **Richmond on Swale Morris Men**

#### Membership

Nick Appleyard, Squire of Richmond on Swale Morris Men is congratulated on becoming Area Representative of the Morris Ring for the North East. Active membership has remained constant over the year. However, a non-active Honorary Member and former Foreman was lost.

#### Practices

Practices were regularly held between the end of September 2023 and into May 2024. The earlier closing times of nearby public houses has meant that practices have ended earlier than in the past. The Foreman, assisted by a Deputy has concentrated on a honing technique to bring less experienced dancers up to a consistent standard.

#### Dance Events Attended

The main dance events were a Boxing Day tour to Aldbrough St John and Richmond; the RoSMM Day of Dance in Richmond as part of the Richmond May Festival and joining Leeds Morris Men's Dales Tour to Kettlewell, Wensley and Middleham. The summer saw 10 Thursday evening dance outs between 9th May and 25th July. A couple of these were with invited local Sides Black Diamond and Black Sheep. Unfortunately, RoSMM did not have the numbers to accept other invitations by Ring and local Sides. Also, the RoSMM Dales Tour with invited local Sides did not go ahead.

#### Non-dancing Events

A pre-Christmas carol singing evening was hosted at The Crown, Manfield which included a performance by RoSMM's Mummers team. The annual dinner with wives and partners was also held in Richmond. Recruitment of new and if possible, younger men is becoming essential if the Side is to survive as a dancing team.

Andrew Bishop  
RoSMM Bagman

### **Claro Longsword**

Team Claro continue to meet regularly for practice on Thursdays throughout the year at Brearton Village Hall, near Knaresborough. We were delighted to dance at Thaxted's Morris Weekend in June, our Yorkshire Longsword tradition offering a contrast to the majority Cotswold styles, and a hugely enjoyable occasion. Yorkshire Day in Skipton 1<sup>st</sup> August with Great Yorkshire Morris was even sunnier, and certainly warmer than Thaxted in June, and a grand day out. Summer evening pub spots kept us on our toes: less so the audiences who kept their toes under dining tables.

The weather for the Sword Dance Union's meeting in Northallerton 2/3 November was surprisingly benign, and although not competing in any of the categories for awards, our performances were well received. Plough Sunday at St. John's Church, Knaresborough on 5<sup>th</sup> January coincided with a heavy fall of overnight snow, preventing all but two of us from attending. The Squire had the foresight to deliver the plough the previous evening so that took pride of place in front of the altar and both team members participated in the service, but obviously no dancing was possible. The first time in 40+ years (Covid excepted) that we have been unable to dance.

Our second Plough Sunday stint of the season was held at St. Andrew's Church, Aldborough on 26<sup>th</sup> January. Dancing in the 14<sup>th</sup> century church is always inspiring and we followed it up with a couple of pub spots in Boroughbridge afterwards.

The camaraderie of an established group brings an enjoyment of the teamwork and discipline needed to put on a convincing show. We are comfortable with what we do, but not complacent, and we manage well enough within the limitations of ageing minds and bodies!

### **SW Area Report – Paul Reece**

#### **Bathampton Morris Men**

Despite low attendance at some evenings of our Summer programme things did improve. Attendances at Winter practices have been good and we experienced a bumper turnout at our Plough Sunday performance.

We have one new dancer out of six who expressed an interest over the Summer, and we will repeat our Summer programme despite pubs closing down all around. A foreign tour has been discussed, but this is unlikely, because our income hasn't fully recovered since Covid.

#### **Bovey Tracey Mummers**

Due to ill health and the advancing years of our troupe, we were only able to perform once last year at Stoke Gabriel wassail. We hope to carry on this year as part of our 50th anniversary.

#### **Bristol Morris Men**

2024 has been a continuing decline in the number of active dancers, most of the side being well over sixty. We have managed to maintain a reduced programme by turning down some of our regular bookings, but our May Day morning in Bristol centre continues.

We attended the 50th anniversary of West Somerset Morris, performed our traditional Mummers Play on Boxing Day and we undertook a couple of workshops prior to our decision to admit women. We have now started a programme of reinvigoration with an introductory workshop and intend to use our 75th anniversary in 2026 as our focus.

#### **Cam Valley Morris Men**

An uneventful past year, but we managed a New Year's Day set dancing in Wells Cathedral, a May Day dawn dance atop Glastonbury Tor and day of dance at Bradford on Avon. We lost our coveted Saturday spot at the Bath and West Show, but did pick up one new recruit during the Summer.

#### **Chalice Morris Men**

Awaiting a report

### **Dartington Morris**

Seven new members have joined practices since October allowing us comfortably to have three sides up at practice and taking our membership up to 40.

With so many new members the cost of bells has been considerable as each pair of pads take 50 bells. The bell pads and the new hooden stag has kept kit maker Colin Lodge busy.

The stag is named Leonard after the former owner of Dartington Hall where we were founded in 1968. We hosted our annual Day of Dance in September with a record dozen sides followed by our now annual Autumn Ale.

### **Exeter Morris**

Continues to thrive as a mixed side and has had another good season. Notable events attended were the Westminster DoD, Devon County Show, Lyme DoD, Dartington Ale, Sidmouth Folk Week with Bathampton, dancing at Exeter Cathedral and the reinstatement of our Whit Monday Tour. At our AGM, five of our newer members took on officer roles, three new and one ex member joined taking our membership to 30, with an age range of 17 to 90.

Our future looks bright with plans to attend Teignmouth Festival and possibly Bridport, Wimborne and Saddleworth. Next year is our 75th anniversary for which we are planning a DoD.

### **Gloucestershire Morris**

Awaiting a report

### **Helier Morris**

After taking the decision two years ago to limit our dance outs and concentrate on practices. Cotswold dances have been resurrected to add to the Border dances begun in 2013.

The highlight of the year has been the Wassailing tour of Jersey cider orchards where we managed to field two sides for some of the dances, a good start to our 50th anniversary year which many didn't believe we would see.

### **Lyme Morris**

Had a fantastic 2024, the highlight being our Morris Day with 26 sides and over 400 dancers and musicians including the Ring Squire and his wife attending on the sea front, our biggest and best in ten years. We danced at Salisbury and Stonehenge with Sarum Morris and at the Belles of London City Ale in London Docklands. Our 2025 DoD is on 12th July.

### **North Curry Mummers**

Awaiting a report

### **Plymouth Morris**

This was our busiest season ever, which with performances of our Elizabethan Mummers Play, our Morris activities are now taking up most of the year. Although greatly in demand it tends to be the same core dancers and musicians shouldering and holding it all together despite numbers on paper being very good.

We have extended our Plymouth tradition with a new dance, The Flowing Tide, and after much research by Ray Newnham, we have introduced, The Old 38, from Lichfield to our repertoire.



Notable events attended were the very dynamic Dartington DoD, the Jockey Plough tour and Stafford Feast again, but this time with 13 members.

We have a very full Summer programme with dances starting at 7:30pm throughout the season, because pubs are closing earlier, especially those serving food.

### **Sweyn's Ey**

We enjoyed a very busy 2024 season and our side grew by another three members and our repertoire by the introduction of our own Sweyn's Ey tradition with the dance, The Curly Boar, which has been well received, (see How Many Morris Dancers are on Facebook). We rounded off the year with Mumming at Christmas raising £1k for a local hospice. All in all, Sweyn's Ey are in fine health.

### **Taunton Deane Morris Men**

Awaiting a report

### **Trigg Morris**

The season started with our customary Easter Monday Tour where we dance our complete repertoire of some 40 dances. The highlight event attended was the Carne Brae DoD at Hayle and our series of Mummers Play performances.

Our dance evenings have traditionally consisted of two venues, but this is difficult to achieve with smaller audiences and pubs closing earlier. We will be reassessing which venues are worth doing and whether we move to a single venue per evening as a more realistic option.

### **Wessex Morris Men**

Awaiting a report

### **West Somerset Morris**

The 2024 season was busy with a larger calendar of events than in previous years. We hosted a well-attended weekend for Thames Valley and Greensleeves MM in April and attended the Taunton Deane MM DoD as part of their 50th anniversary and our usual visit to the Wessex Festival. We revived our Mummers Play performed to crowds at Dunster on Boxing Day morning.

We lost our much-loved long-standing member and SW Area Rep, Dudley Binding. He had a fine send off from the side at his funeral and joined by local Ring sides.

Numbers are steady with new dancers and musicians attending over the practice season. 2025 is our 60th anniversary year with a celebratory feast planned for April and a special Summer dance programme and two days of dance in June and July for invited sides.

### **Wyvern Jubilee Morris Men**

Awaiting a report

### **NW Area Report – David Loughlin**

Report not available at time of publication

### **South Midlands Area Report – Geoff Pitt**

Report not available at time of publication

**East Midlands Area Report – Charlie Corcoran**

Report not available at time of publication

### Future Events (Events organised by Morris Ring Teams in Bold text)

2 <sup>nd</sup> March	Morris Federation 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Day of Dance (Armitage, Staffs)
15 <sup>th</sup> March	<b>Jockey Morris Anniversary Ale, Birmingham</b>
4 <sup>th</sup> April	Dance England Rapper Tournament (DERT) (Peterborough)
12 <sup>th</sup> April	Doncaster DoD, G
13 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>Bury Pace-Eggers Annual Tour</b>
26 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>JMO DoD 2025 – Stockport</b>
17 <sup>th</sup> May	<b>Westminster Morris Dancers DoD, London</b>
30 <sup>th</sup> May – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Jun	<b>Thaxted Morris Weekend</b>
21 <sup>st</sup> Jun	<b>Election of Mayor of Ock Street, Abingdon Tradition Morris Dancers</b>
12 <sup>th</sup> July	<b>Ewell DoD</b>
12 <sup>th</sup> July	<b>Victory MM DoD, Portsmouth</b>
19 <sup>th</sup> July	<b>Anker Ring Meeting in Nuneaton, Warks</b>
19 <sup>th</sup> July	<b>Buxton DoD, hosted by Chapel-en-le-Frith</b>
19 <sup>th</sup> July	Morris Federation 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary DoD (Exmoor, Devon)
22 <sup>nd</sup> -24 <sup>th</sup> Aug	<b>Saddleworth Rushcart Weekend</b>
6 <sup>th</sup> Sept	<b>Winchester Morris Men's Annual Walking Tour</b> (contact Winchester for invite)
13 <sup>th</sup> Sept	<b>Ripley DoD Celebrating 100 years of Morris Dancing in Ripley</b>
13 <sup>th</sup> Sept	<b>Dartington DoD, Totnes</b>
27 <sup>th</sup> Sept	<b>White Hart DoD in Alcester, Warks</b>
27 <sup>th</sup> Sept	<b>Peterborough Morris DoD</b>
27 <sup>th</sup> Sept	<b>St Albans DoD (celebrating 95 years)</b>
11 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Jockey Morris DoD, Birmingham</b>
24 <sup>th</sup> -26 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Illustrious Order of Fools & Beasts Unconvention 2025 (Otley, W Yorks), hosted by Wharfedale Wayzgoose Border Morris
6 <sup>th</sup> Dec	<b>Original Welsh Border Morris Men Practice</b>
20 <sup>th</sup> Dec	<b>Original Welsh Border Morris Men Tour</b>

## AOB's

### **Morris Dance Database – Colin Andrews**

Since the Database first went public back in 2018, it has continued to expand and be visited both by members of Morris sides and the general public, with over 17,000 viewings in the last 9 months. There has also been an increasing number of enquiries from the general public, usually about booking a Morris side, and I have always directed the person enquiring to appropriate active sides.

There are now nearly 1000 active sides listed world-wide, with 767 at the last count in the UK Of these 162 are listed as all male, 147 as female, 443 as mixed and 15 as joint. Sides performing Cotswold and/or Border make up nearly two-thirds of the active teams in the UK. This is also reflected in the 4,500 dances listed, with over 2,200 Cotswold dances and half that number of Border dances compared with about. A recent tweak has enabled a search of dances by 'old' or 'new' tradition, and, within a list of dances in a specific 'old' tradition (e.g. Bledington), the facility to sort dances as old' (originally collected) or 'new' (in the style of). There is the possibility that essentially the same dance may be listed under two or more different names, or more than one very different choreography exist for a dance with a specific name and tradition, as recently came to light in a query by Braggarts Morris (USA) about Bledington style British Grenadiers. The website has never published dance notation, but many sides do now include a video link to a performances of their dances. It is recommended that sides do make use of the facility on the website to include brief details about where or from whom information about their dance notation (for their own dances particularly) can be found. This would be of great help to anyone researching new dances in the future!

The archive section of the database has been expanded, most recently with details about classification of traditional Cotswold tunes by the late Gwilym Davies (as part of his M. Phil. Thesis).

In setting up the database it was hoped that all sides would set up a team editor who would keep the information for their side up to date. Although the number of team editors is slowly growing, it is still less than 50%. I would encourage all sides to have a team editor; no great computer skills are needed – just someone who can find their way around a fairly straightforward website and interact accordingly. Bearing in mind, too, that I am advancing in years, I would be interested to hear from anyone who might be willing to get involved in the admin/monitoring of the database, in support of myself and the webmaster, Anahata.

Once again I would like to thank the Morris Ring for its continued sponsorship of the Morris Dance Database.

the MORRIS RIBB  
1934 ~  
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