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Newsletter No. 109

February 2018

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Morris Ring 2018 Annual Reps' Meeting Saturday 10th March

Just a few weeks to go, and still not too late to apply. The venue is Oak Farm Hotel, Watling Street, Hatherton, Cannock, Staffs WS11 1SB (one minute from M6 junction 12). Please send application forms to the Bagman for the ARM, Peter Copley. The application form is included as Appendix 1 of this Newsletter.

There are a number of agenda items which may affect the running of Ring events, or of the Ring itself. It is important that as many sides and viewpoints as possible are represented, so the ARM can be genuinely representative of the Morris Ring as a whole, so please try to send a rep. To encourage the voice of young morris, any under-18s are half price if they wish to attend.

If your side is unable to be represented, please send apologies to bagman@themorrisring.org.

Programme for the day

10:00 – 11:00 Arrival and coffee

11:00 – 12:30 Area meetings

12:30 Ballot for speakers on Constitutional change motion

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 15:30 ARM

15:30 – 16:00 Tea and coffee

16:00 – Advisory Council meeting

17:00 – 18:30 Informal dancing

19:00 - Feast (in kit)

Informal singing and dancing to follow.

00:30 - Bar closes

Agenda for the ARM 2018

1) Attendees and Apologies

Please will any sides not able to attend let the Bagman of the Ring have their apologies as a matter of urgency.

2) Minutes from ARM 2017

Minutes of the 2017 ARM were circulated as an Appendix to Newsletter No 105 in April 2017. Copies will NOT be available for perusal at the Meeting.

Proposer

Secunder

3) Matters Arising from the Minutes

4) Squire's Report – Ed Worrall

The last year has passed quickly, and I have attended many events as Squire, meeting many of you along the way. Reports in the Circular have recorded this in more detail than I will here. However I would like to thank the generosity of the many sides who have invited me to their events. The friendship and fun of my time as Squire will stay with me for life.

I would also like to record my thanks to the members of the Advisory Council, and others beyond, who have been an invaluable source of assistance throughout my term in office. No Squire can operate in isolation. Jon Melville as our indefatigable Bagman and Steven Archer as Treasurer have also helped make my time as Squire more enjoyable by their company, and more smooth by their work as fellow Officers. Steven is due to retire after 6 years as Treasurer at this year's ARM and I wish him well in his (Morris) retirement.

I shall be dancing out myself on the Sunday of the Saddleworth Rushcart Ring Meeting. Subject to appointments being ratified at the ARM I am very pleased to be handing over the reins of office to my friend Pete Simpson of Jockey Morris Men.

Our other new Officer is Clayton Francis of East Surrey Morris Men who will taking over as our new Treasurer. Many of you will know Clayton from his time as ESMM's Bagman. I first suggested he consider standing as Treasurer at East Surrey's Rye weekend in May last year. Having recruited his daughter Bethany to work on convincing him to stand, I am glad her hard work has paid off! I think I am right in saying Clayton will be the first East Surrey side member to be an officer of the Morris Ring. A proud moment for him and one of our 6 founding clubs.

As you will know, the Morris Ring at this year's ARM must decide on a proposal by Leicester MM to alter our Constitution to remove the bar on gender in our member sides. By the time of the ARM many sides will have met to discuss their views, taken part in debate on the Google Group and elsewhere, and considered the issues raised.

In my statement on Leicester's proposal I asked sides to reflect on the fundamental principles of the Morris Ring: fellowship, friendship, standard of dance and its teaching, a concern for the perpetuation of Morris into the future. I also warned of decline and irrelevance if we turned away from the fact that both the society within which we live and the Morris world as it now stands are radically different from those at the time of our founding in the 1930's. If we fail to reflect this environment in how we are and act, we have little future.

I stand by all of this and I wish all Morris Ring member sides to consider these final points:

We were founded to bring about change in the Morris world. Change, and an understanding of the possibilities that change can bring, are in our DNA. Without change there would have been no creation of the Morris Ring in 1934.

At countless feasts since, we have toasted the memory of those collectors and teachers of Morris who have given us all so much. But in doing so, we are toasting their foresight in passing on a legacy.

We stand at a point in time in our history where we can do the same if we embrace change. The principles I mention above do have value and relevance to the Morris world, but without change, we cannot hope to pass them on and we risk them fading from history.

Others have changed when we would not. Let us rediscover our confidence and founding spirit and take a leading role in the future of the Morris world.

Advisory Council Working Group

It is clear that many issues will require consideration, following the vote on Leicester's motion at the ARM. With that in mind I will be referring the matter to the Advisory Council immediately after the ARM. I have asked both Geoff Jerram and Mike Garland to join the Advisory Council discussion at this year's ARM to assist as co-opted members. Both bring much valuable experience and abilities to assist the Council's work.

If Leicester's motion was accepted, I also set up a working group to coordinate the taking of views, proposing action etc. on a number of issues: Internal/external relations, organisational change that may be required, the promotion of a higher standard of dance, among others. This would make an initial report back to the Officers and membership over the summer.

Pete Simpson has agreed to chair such a working group, if it is required, as Squire Elect. Clayton Francis as incoming Treasurer has agreed to be the vice-chair. They would decide the composition of such a working group beyond that.

There is a wide range of talent in the Morris Ring, and we would need to tap it all.

Ed Worrall, Squire of the Morris Ring

5) Bagman's Report – Jon Melville

I should like to offer my thanks to all those hosts who have invited me to their Ales, Feasts and events in my capacity as Bagman, to Pete de Courcy and Martin Jones who keep the technology functioning and the Spam at bay, and to Ed Worrall and Steven Archer for all the hard work they have put in during their tenure in office and the support they have given the Ring and its Bagman.

While I am delighted at the increase in membership on the Google Group and the increased traffic of both information and informed opinion, might I remind Bagmen to circulate the Newsletter to club members when it arrives, and ask everyone to read it, before requesting information which is contained therein?

I have been delighted to be involved in a number of activities this past year which will hopefully contribute to the continuance of the Morris and improvements in standards.

Many thanks to all those who volunteered their time to support nascent Morris sides in their start-up phase; through this we have provided support to two, one of which, Knightlow Morris of Ryton-on-Dunsmore, has now danced at both its first Ale and achieved its first public performance. Remarkable for a side where all the core membership are either new to Morris or are not currently members of other teams.

The Ring Jigs Instructional team has been on tour, supporting the Orchard Morris Project in Dorking; this is an independent set of come-all-ye Morris workshops intended to promote and encourage Morris in what is currently its heartland, the South East of England. Credit is also due to East Surrey MM who have also supported this initiative.

In similar vein, I have been gathering input from a number of Foremen with a view to collating a Foreman's Handbook – not so much a “do it like this” document, but something offering advice and guidance to inexperienced Foremen on teaching the dance and improving standards. The next step will be a Musician's Handbook - watch this space!

I have attended a number of Ring, JMO and regular Morris events in the past year and it is impossible not to observe declining standards of both dance and performance from an ageing Morris population. While it is delightful to see youth and energy demonstrating how it ought to be done, it remains a shame to inform any team that their services will not be required for a Ring Meeting show dance.

As we enter what will be a period of considerable change for the Morris Ring regardless of the outcome of “the vote,” I believe the above demonstrates that the Morris Ring has a relevance and a significant part to play in fulfilling its core objectives, encouraging the performance of the Morris and maintaining its traditions.

Jon Melville, Indefatigable Bagman of the Morris Ring

6) Treasurer's Report – Steven Archer

1 Introduction

Despite a reduced membership, income held up due to some very generous donations. With substantial collections at Ring Meetings and reduced expenditure, the General Fund recorded a healthy surplus in the year. As our reserves remain strong, once again I have no plans to propose a subscription increase.

2 Membership

Update on the changes in membership this renewal:-

Harry Taylor's Men - following an overwhelming vote in favour of their full membership of the Morris Ring, the side danced in at the London Ring Meeting.

The Forest of Dean Morris Men – ran out of men and decided to go mixed to increase numbers. They have now joined the Morris Federation

Cinque Port Morris Men - ran out of men and disbanded

Hexham Morris Men – decided at their AGM to join the Morris Federation. Whilst wishing to remain a male dancing side they felt that the MR's perspective on women's involvement in Ring activities was increasingly anachronistic.

One Day Wonders Travelling Morris - has disbanded

One renewal remains outstanding and is expected in January.

Overall we lost 4 sides at this renewal, half disbanded and half joined the Fed. However the situation could have been twice as bad as a further four sides have informed us of their intention to follow a recruitment strategy free from the male only restriction in 2018. Under the current Constitution this would mean leaving the Morris Ring to pursue their future with another JMO member. However in the light of Leicester MM's proposal for constitutional change they have decided to renew for this year and await the outcome of the vote. These sides have no desire to leave the Morris Ring but will find themselves forced to do so unless the current constitution is amended. This has also been the case for many of the other sides which have left in the past 6 years of my tenure.

Prior year history
of net change

2016 - 3 lost

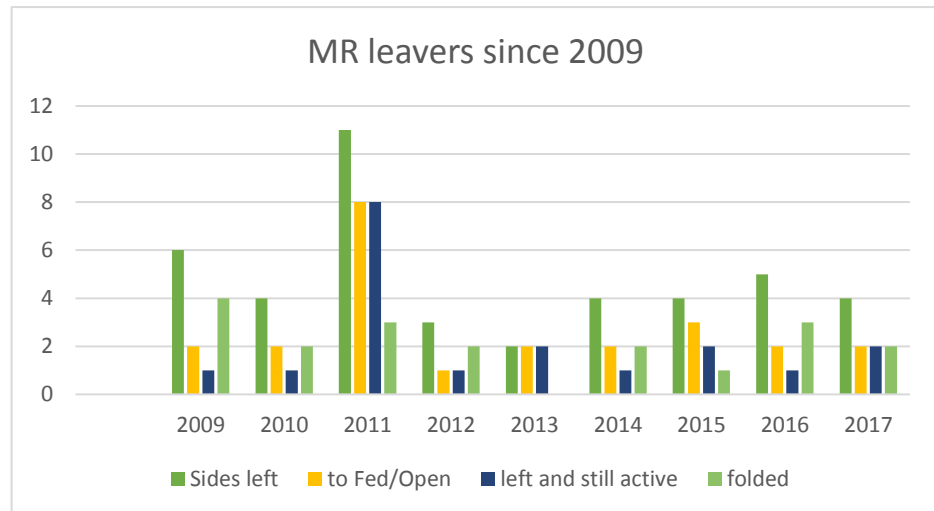
2015 - 3 lost

2014 - 4 lost

2013 - 2 gained

2012 - 3 lost

2011 - 10 lost



At renewal once again we asked for the “number of active members”. This year just 75% of our 169 sides responded. The data showed that 25% of sides had increased in number, 20% declined and 55% remained the same. This is a significantly different result from last year's even split between all three categories. Average membership remained at just under 18 per side, giving a total projected number of 3,000 individuals, down from 3,115 last year.

3 Classes of Membership

At present we have just two classes of membership:-

Full Membership with full voting rights and Public Liability Insurance.

Associate Membership without voting rights but with Public Liability insurance.

In order to permit and encourage Morris sides which already have Public Liability Insurance with another organisation to enjoy membership of the Morris Ring, I recommend the creation of a **Joint Membership** category. This will open up an opportunity for any side which meets the Constitutional requirements of the Morris Ring and has PL insurance cover elsewhere, to seek Joint Membership. The side may be a standalone entity or a distinct part of a larger umbrella organisation. In effect this will be Associate Membership without insurance cover at an annual cost of £20 subject to annual review.

4 Ring Finances

Donations – We have been very fortunate this year to receive donations totalling nearly £3,800. £3,000 came from an old friend and long standing supporter of the Morris Ring and will be used to purchase a special print run of the final printed edition of Lionel's Handbook of Morris Dancing. It will be on sale in the Morris Shop later in the 2018. £800 came from the closing bank balance of a side which folded.

Ring Meetings – Each of the three 2017 meetings received a grant of £500 and in return donated collections amounting to a total of nearly £1,370, so the net cost of meetings for the year was £130. Previous years are as follows:-

2016 – loss of £300

2015 – loss of £700

2014 – loss of £200

2013 – loss of £300

2017 has been the first financial year since you voted to pay the officer's and shop costs for attendance at Ring Meetings from MR funds. This is shown as a separate line in the accounts.

The Shop - the shop had a difficult time towards the year end when the website failed and Shaun suffered communications problems. However he managed to attend 13 meetings during the year including most of the Morris Ring events.

Archive Fund – As you will see from the Archive report, the group has been busy and some funds have been spent preparing to catalogue our archive at The Essex Record Office. Overall donations remained similar to last year.

Youth Fund – It was a thin year for youth events as The Sussex Schools Festival did not run and the only claim on funds came from the Leicester MM Youth Instructional. The Sussex festival will run again in 2018 and we look forward to more opportunities arising in the coming year.

Other costs and reserves – Officer's costs were only £900 this year, lower than last year. £175 was paid out to members attending the Jigs weekend for the first or second time, more than the previous year. The cost of Insurance rose less than expected but remains and increasing expense. Over £270 interest was received on funds deposited. This is less than last year, reflecting lower interest rates.

5 General policy and financial reserves

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

We are financially supporting youth projects to encourage new life into our tradition, jigs workshops to drive up dancing standards and providing grants to Ring Meetings to enable more of you to attend and meet other sides. We have enhanced our website to make it easier to view on mobile devices and we will continue to supply your needs from The Morris Shop.

Put together this is an ambitious combination of direct subsidy and increased risk taken against a background of increasing costs and falling membership. This is only made possible by our current financial strength and we must not squander it.

6 And finally

This is my sixth and final report. I shall be handing over the “cheque book” to a new Treasurer at the ARM. I have served with four Squires and two Bagmen so now seems a good time to move on. I have had a wonderful ride over the last six years and I am pleased to be able to hand over the role to such a talented and capable team at such an optimistic time for the Morris Ring.

Of course I am personally pleased that the finances are now stronger than ever and that the subscription rates have not increased on my watch; we are spending money on things which directly benefit you all and we are moving forward. I came to office just after the vote to admit female musicians and I am leaving on the cusp of a decision to make the Morris Ring open to all those who wish to celebrate The Morris and enjoy its fellowship. By moving forward to reflect the society around us whilst continuing to respect our heritage, we have a bright future ahead.

It’s been a pleasure meeting so many of you over the years and if you live near a canal I may yet drop in to see you on my retirement tour of the inland waterways, so we could meet again.

Steven Archer, Treasurer of the Morris Ring

Proposal:

To create an additional category of Joint Membership of the Morris Ring, for sides already members of other Organisations, at a cost of £20 per annum. All conditions of Membership other than the requirement for membership of another Organisation shall be as Associate Membership.

Proposer Steven Archer, Treasurer of the Morris Ring

Secunder

7) Chair of the Advisory Council's Report – Adam Garland

Since I took over this position my responsibilities have been fairly simple to perform. Our Squire has basically had only two items on the agenda; how the Ring goes about recruiting, and how the different areas recruitment projects are performing.

There is a common understanding that recruiting is a difficult matter and though many different ideas have been tried there is still limited success. The discussions at the Advisory Council have centred around this issue but I shall let the Area Reps pass comment in their reports on the current situation.

More recently our Squire has asked the Council to consider the procedural aspects of consulting with members re the motion to alter the constitution to welcome mixed sides as member clubs.

The discussion highlighted the following aspects;

- 1) The process should be open and transparent
- 2) It should aim to be fully inclusive allowing all clubs to voice their opinion and not just those who speak loudest
- 3) It should be mediated so as to be constructive and not just deteriorate into personal vitriol or insults
- 4) As a matter of priority it should confirm that **individual clubs will not be forced to alter their own membership**
- 5) It should encourage all member clubs to exercise their right to vote

The Morris Ring is on the verge of being able to make a hugely important decision in order to make another step forward in the evolution of this 600 year old tradition. The Advisory Council were keen to ensure that all current member clubs could participate in this process and be content that their voice would not be ridiculed, the mediation of the process will ensure that personal attacks will not be acceptable.

8) Archive Report – Chris Wildridge

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

Introduction

This report covers the period which commenced with a meeting of the Morris Ring Archive Group at the ARM 2017.

MRAG Meetings 2017

Two meetings were held in 2017, one in March at the ARM, another in September at John Edwards' house. My thanks to John and his wife, Carol, for their accommodating the Group and their excellent catering.

In March several new members were welcomed to the Group, Gordon Blunt [Rutland], John Edwards [Stafford] and Derek Schofield [Manley]. Gordon and John bring their experience of web sites to the skills set in the Group and Derek has a national profile throughout the world of traditional music and dance. There has been one resignation from the Group as Andy Padmore has resigned as the Keeper of the Sound Archive.

At the March meeting there was a wide ranging discussion on a series of topics including the:

- 1 possibility of using the MR website to host copies of key documents
- 2 constitution of the Morris Ring Archive Group
- 3 status of the Morris Ring Archive at Chelmsford should the Morris Ring be wound up
- 4 transfer of films in the MR Archive to digital formats. It is now possible to access films in the MR Archive by visiting the Essex Record Office. Work is in progress to obtain copyright permissions

Visit to Chelmsford, 10th February, 2017

On 10th February 2017 I visited the Essex Record Office [ERO] with Geoff Douglas. Staff reductions had resulted in the postponement of any bid development activities. The discussion with the Archivist covered methods of obtaining a better understanding of the contents of the Archive.

Visit to Chelmsford, 25th – 28th July 2017

As a result of that visit I started working on the Chris Metherell database to better understand how it related to the MR Archive in Chelmsford.

A detailed account of that exercise, "Report on the analysis of documents in the Essex Record Office 2017 08 25" is available from the Chairman.

The Metherell database includes material in his private collection and material now in the Sword Dance Archive administered by Phil Heaton.

A desk exercise to remove those two classes of material from the database and to integrate the remainder with details contained in the Essex Record Online Catalogue SEAX was carried out. A report on that exercise, "Resolution of queries about the Morris Ring Archive 2017 09 08" is also available from the Chairman.

These reports have been discussed by the Group. Further work is required to provide a more accurate estimate of the contents of the MR Archive.

Contents of the Morris Ring Archive Chelmsford

In preparing the above reports a number of issues were discussed in emails with Chris Metherell. In summary this is the definitive statement by the Morris Ring Archive Group:

The MR Archive contains manuscript material, original research, letters, agendas, minutes, accounts, working documents, photographs, films, music recordings, videos and ephemera.

It does not contain books, magazine articles collected by Ivor Allsop and others and previously regarded as part of the MR Archive. Chris Metherell confirmed that the Essex Record Office would not accept any books or magazine articles. Books had been passed to the Morris Ring shop and sold. Magazines had been disposed of prior to the transfer to the Essex Record Office in 2010.

MRAG Meeting September 2017

The meeting considered the following:

An 'operating document' for the Group and the copyright of films in the ERO.

Electronic archive and a survey of websites

Individual team archives

Morris dance database – being developed by Colin Andrews

The development of a programme to address these and other initiatives was discussed.

Morris Ring Photographic Archive Report- 2018

It has been another good year for the Morris Ring Photographic Archive; with a regular stream of enquiries throughout the year.

New photographs and information have been donated by Morris sides, individual collectors and dancers plus relatives of ex Morris men, the largest single donation was of 51 photographs from Paul Woloschuk, all are gratefully received. I have also

liaised with other collectors and archives in a quest for information about various historical photographs in the Morris Ring Archive, often has often involved interesting detective work. The bulk of the work I have carried out during the last year has been answering enquiries, supplying photos and providing information. During the year I have supplied photographs and information, to a wide range of different people including Morris sides researching their own history, individual Morris dancers, other collectors, academics wanting photographs for papers, authors wanting illustrations, genealogists researching their family Morris heritage, CD and book cover designs, a blog, Archivists plus two exhibitions and a talk about the history of Morris Dancing.

Since the September meeting work has progressed on obtaining copyright clearance for films in the MR Archive, re-assessing the descriptions of the films and with ERO staff on upgrading the catalogue entries on the ERO web based catalogue prior to the films being made available online.

Mumming Archive Report – Ron Shuttleworth

As always I am continuing to develop, expand and service the Digital Collection. In the past year I have compiled a full list of all known collections which contain or might contain material about Folk Plays, including lists and where possible, scans, of such material. Also, courtesy of Duncan Broomhead I have digitised and fully listed the Papers of Major Arnold Boyd, who revived Antrobus Soulcakers.

I have recently abandoned the TDRG website and started my own at <https://folkplayarchive.co.uk/>

During the Summer, ‘new’ material dried up to the point where I began to wonder if there was any more to get, but in the last couple of months things have really hotted up in a way that shows that there is still work to do.

9) Publications Officers’ Reports – Tony Foard - Ring Circular

A dearth of submitted material, and the non-appearance of some pledged articles, resulted in just one issue of *The Morris Ring Circular* being published in 2017. I have to echo Mac McCoig, editor of *The Morris Dancer*, when he remarks, “Sadly...contributions [for publication] come to me rarely and in dribs and drabs.” It is an established fact that, as far as the remit of *The Morris Ring Circular* (celebrating the activities of Morris Ring member sides) is concerned, very many sides now find it far more convenient and timely to share the fruits of their energies on Facebook, Instagram and Flickr etc. as well as through their own world wide web domains (including the Morris Ring’s very own website, on occasions). The advantages of this approach are undeniable and the community, in the main, benefits greatly. Of course, one must knowingly seek out or be led to such jewels (cf Donald Rumsfeld’s “unknown unknowns”), whereas printed Morris publications like the *MRC* do at least present a topical record, however incomplete, of boots, shoes and clogs on the ground (and digital enfranchisement is not a prerequisite to its enjoyment).

You may also be interested (but not astonished) to learn that postage for the last issue of *MRC*, at twenty-four A4 pages, constituted 47% of the overall production cost.

In the light of all this, it may be time to consider anew how best we provide a house organ in paper form that adequately shows off what Morris Ring sides are all about.

Meanwhile, grateful thanks to those who have sent photographs and articles to *The Morris Ring Circular*, and I invite contributions of any scope and length for future issues— even that one photograph you took which somehow captured the moment. I'd especially appreciate more reports and photos from Morris Ring meetings and other similar showcase events, many of which fail to find their way into the editorial in-box. Mac, Jon and I will liaise to sort out what gets published where, so please get writing and snapping. *Thanks!*

Mac McCoig – The Morris Dancer

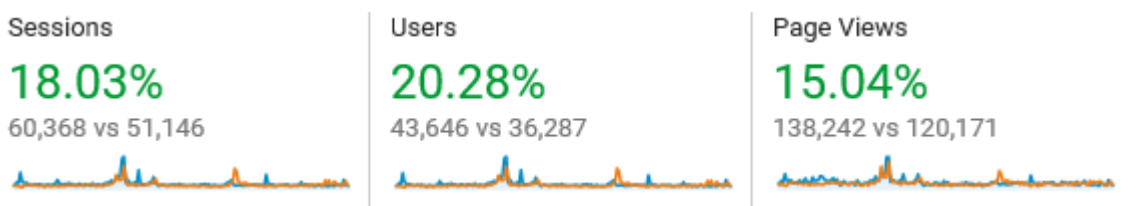
I have managed just one issue in the last year – once again due to the dearth of articles to include. I am therefore appealing for any articles/papers/studies etc. for likely inclusion in the 'Dancer'.

One thought I had was to publish an issue or two dedicated to histories of our Ring sides, past or present. Anyone that has written a history of their side (and I know most of you have), and would like to see it in The Morris Dancer, would you please send me a copy: mac.mccoig@btinternet.com. Don't forget, copies of The Morris Dancer are lodged with the British Library as a permanent record for future historians and academics.

Peter De Courcy – Web Editor

It has been another very satisfactory year for your web site with healthy increased activity in all areas with over 60,000 visitor sessions during the last year, viewing our pages 138,242 times. The 20% users increase was due in no small part to Martin Jones' new "responsive" mobile friendly interface. Desktop visitors now account for just half of the traffic with mobiles taking a third and the final sixth from tablets. I know of a fair number of musicians who now listen to the mp3 of a dance tune on their phone to remind them how it goes – progress!

The following metrics give an idea of reach of our pages for the year 2017 and % increases on 2016



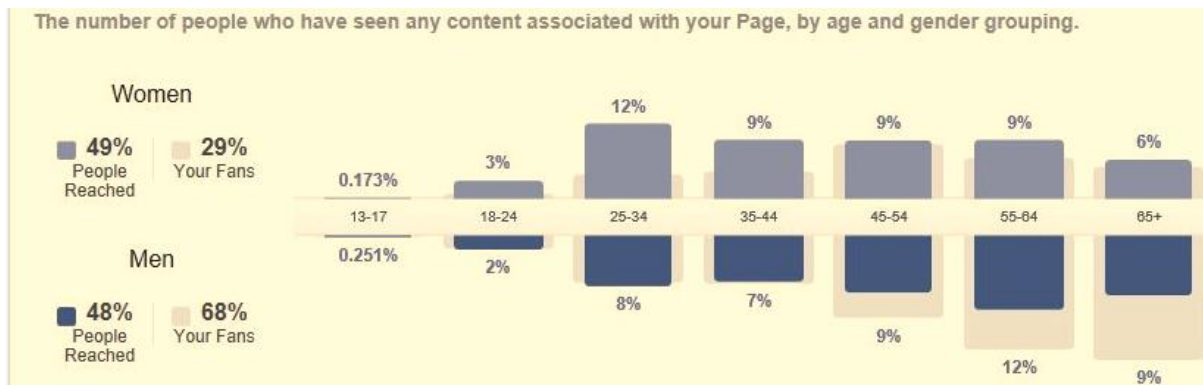
The Morris Matters news summary still proves popular with Saddleworth taking the prize yet again for most "googlable" media coverage in 2017 followed again by Grimsby with Icknield Way and Silurian tying for third place. A reminder; I only post news involving member sides. Traditional Events pages continue to be updated regularly, usually a couple of weeks before each of "the seasons". Last year's May Day page had over 5000 hits! Those sides without up to date websites will be missed unless you let me know about your "Traditional" event.

As always, any technical issues – and there were only a couple in 12 months despite the upgrade - were quickly solved by Martin Jones of Natty Web Development (and Dartington Morris); my thanks again to him for making my job so painless. My target of making updates

within 48 hours of receiving them (well over 400) has been maintained, holidays and weekends of dance permitting.

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

I continue to share much information posted on Facebook by Ring sides, or their active Facebookers, on our own Facebook page, regularly beating Eddie Worrall to it. Importantly I post links to website events, news items and journal publications. Some 400 people are reached regularly each day, over 3000 each month "engaging" with our posts by sharing, commenting or liking. The January Newsletter reached over 6000 people in 3 days! I wonder why? The number of people liking our page broke the 1000 barrier and currently stands at 1024. Our audience is rather diverse - and could be potential recruits. Worth the effort I believe, which I'm happy to carry on doing.



10) Overseas Bagman's Report – Nigel Strudwick

I have probably more events and things to write about from overseas than in my East report. I understand that Silkeborg came to the Thaxted meeting which I was unable to attend due to a clash with my village's Whitsun event. We hosted Martin Graetz of Pinewoods for a few days, and he also danced out with DDMM one evening. Although not a Ring side, Minnesota Traditional Morris, a men's side whom I have known for more than a few years, did a tour of the UK and also danced with DDMM and attended the Ely Folk Festival in July.

I have done a check-in with all sides about whether they have any strong feelings one way or the other on the Leicester MM motion that is going to dominate the ARM. I have not heard from every club, but where I have, the feeling seems as in the East to be inevitable acceptance but that everyone has indicated that they intend to stay male dancer only. Several sides in North America and Australia have commented on the very different Morris histories and environments there anyway, and Perth MM particularly noted that they and Adelaide MM, our two Antipodean sides, are the only male sides left in Australia.

Talking of Australia, it was a big Morris year Down Under. The Australian Morris Ring National Ale in August–September, which went from Adelaide to Melbourne to Canberra, was by all accounts a great success. Despite some interest, in the end the only UK side to go was Ragged Robin, but I received a very enthusiastic write-up from Peter Austin (Jockey etc). I had given serious consideration to going, but an earlier invitation to lecture in that country meant I was there in March–April, where I had the opportunity to dance in Perth with Perth MM, one of the highlights of my trip. It was great to see the most isolated Ring side on the planet in their home environment.

As usual, many UK sides have made overseas trips this year, including my own Devil's Dyke. Everything I have heard is good. I have had a few more enquiries than usual about whether I am aware of any particular overseas event, but I have to confess that data available to me really rarely extends beyond what most sides already know or what is available via CIOFF. I would again encourage sides who have travelled to let me know any information that they think might be useful for others.

11) Elections

Squire of the Morris Ring for 2018-2020

There is one candidate to be ratified as Squire of the Morris Ring, Peter Simpson of Jockey MM, nominated by Chalice MM.



Peter's statement: I discovered the joys of Morris dancing on joining Jockey MM 20 years ago. Being a member of Jockey I've danced Cotswold, Border, Rapper and some Longsword. I'm also a member of the Original Welsh Border and, last year, I proudly became a life member of Green Man Morris. Over the years I've served Jockey as Archivist, Deputy Foreman and Foreman.

Nine years ago I was asked to become West Midlands Area Representative for the Morris Ring. It's a role I thoroughly enjoy, enabling me to meet clubs, make friends and stretch my dance skills. As Area rep' you're at the heart of the Morris Ring, giving you a unique insight into its workings, your own area and of the JMO.

In recent years, as AR, I've helped breathe life into the first regional JMO at Warwick and put a team together to organise ARMs. I have helped and supported 18–30, enabling them to come to Birmingham. Currently I am looking for a way to revitalise the Lichfield tradition.

I regularly attend Saddleworth Rushcart, Thaxted, JMO meetings and days of dance, happily dancing with scratch sides if my own club is not there.

For me the big issue is the future of the Morris Ring. Recruitment is a big part of this, not just young men but capable men of all ages. I've strong opinions on the importance of dance and display standards. We are, after all, dancers and should be careful to maintain the Morris Ring's high standards.

Treasurer of the Morris Ring 2018

There is one candidate to be ratified as Treasurer of the Morris Ring, Clayton Francis of East Surrey MM, nominated by Greensleeves MM.

Clayton's statement: I have been dancing with East Surrey Morris Men since 2000 and have been Bagman from 2007-17 (this is a combined secretary and treasurer role). During the course of my tenure the accounts which were barely breaking even were transformed to have enough working capital to see the year through and create a deposit account with a healthy balance.

In my professional career I have had full Profit and Loss responsibility for Europe for a medium sized business and run my own Consultancy business. Currently I am a teacher of Computer Science and Business to 11 - 19 year olds in a secondary school. I have also held the Treasurer role for Balham Cycling Club for 8 years up to 2002.

I put my name forward to become Treasurer of the Morris Ring having had proven experience in managing the accounts of East Surrey MM for 10 years. I have exercised prudent financial management but significantly am not afraid to spend money when it is necessary.



I have been a huge supporter of the Morris Ring partly coming from a founder side, and as a result have a long heritage and commitment to make it an organisation to be proud of. I believe that I can be a positive influence within the Morris Ring and the Morris world beyond and will apply my skills in partnership with the Bagman to support the Squire in the future.

I would be honoured to be elected and serve as Treasurer.

Area Reps

Area Representatives (year of re-election in brackets)

North Midlands, Ben Robinson (2018)

South Midlands, Roger Comley (2018)

Northern, Paul Cross (2018)

North West, David Loughlin (2020)

North East, Brian Pollard (2019)

West Midlands, Peter Simpson (2020) *May require replacement, see above*

Eastern, Nigel Strudwick (2019)

South Wales and West, Paul Reece (2020)

South East, Cliff Marchant (2018)

12) Proposal:

To admit Leominster Morris, Associate Members of the Morris Ring, to full Membership.

Proposer Pete Simpson, Jockey MM

Seconder Chipping Campden MM

Supporting statement: Pete Simpson, in his capacity as Area Rep, can confirm that he has seen Leominster Morris perform to a standard suitable for Membership of the Morris Ring.

13) Area Representatives' Reports – Dave Loughlin (NW)

This last year has been as follows;

The Britannia Coconut Dancers have been attending various events & folk festivals through the country to show their great tradition whilst recruiting and training up new members. Also a new secretary and treasurer have been working on the new website and shop that is up and running but updates and improvements on the site continue. Now they are busy organizing the Crown Affair which is the day of dance that they host. They have been able to double the number of sides that they can invite.

Going into 2018 they are working very hard to get the newest members up to scratch whilst looking for more (new members). Up to now they have a nice selection of venues which they are working on to have a strong team in order for them to keep on dancing. Easter Saturday preparations are well on the way for them to continue the Annual Customary Boundary Dance on 31st March 2018. They are also working with the local council / councillors and TM Company.

Unfortunately this is not the same for Mossley Morris Men. They have had a quiet year due to lack of numbers, danced locally and at Rush Cart, but unless they get more members it is not looking good for this year.

Kinnerton MM have had a good 2017 season dancing out 16 times which was (the same as 2016). That broke down in to 7 pub nights, 3 paid bookings, 2 good will bookings, 3 full days of dance which included Saddleworth Rush Cart and a tour of Derbyshire. They only have nine dancing members and three musician members; their last dancer recruit was in 2015. They gained a musician recruit this autumn and also saw the return of a past member for the practice season only....he returns to Spain in March! They now have no one under the age of 60 with one man over 80.... as is the returnee.. Average age is 67. They can still put on a lively show though, so things are looking good for 2018. Already they have accepted three invitations to dance with others sides and are also hoping to organize a weekend of dance....and yes have invited two ladies teams.

Chapel-en-le-Frith Morris Men are pretty much the same as this time last year, although they have gained a musician - a fiddler who has recently come to be in love with the area and has already proving to be a great acquisition. This therefore enables the longstanding musician/dancers to take more part in the dancing effectively increasing the dancing men by one.

They continue to practice on Monday evenings at the Playhouse, Chapel-en-le-Frith and dance out regularly on Monday evenings from May to September. With many invitations to dance out they find they are frequently unable to accept them. The usual reason - they are all getting older and a number of the men are carrying age-related injuries such as knees and ankles. Present number is about 17, but two are now non-dancing for the reason just given.

Leyland are still ticking over with no new recruits it was their 50th last year and they had a busy year dancing out at least once per month thro' 2017.

Thelwall Morris Men had another full programme in 2017, most engagements being local but with a notable trip to the Thaxted meeting in June. The side has made extensive attempts to recruit. There was hope with three potential recruits appearing in September, but one has not been seen since and the other two immediately picked up injuries so will be unlikely to be dancing out in 2018. The team now has a nominal 15 members, but their 2018 programme is likely to be reduced, due to a significant number of on-going injuries. They are however looking forwards to the Helmond Ring meeting.

In 2017 the North British Sword Dancers celebrated their 25th anniversary with yet another visit to the Saddleworth Rushcart, which was where it all began for them. In the last year they have had their two regular practice weekends, this time in Birmingham and Liverpool, and have recruited several new members. The regular Easter excursion was to Antwerp, and in view of the anniversary an extra trip on the ferry was arranged dancing at the Hasseltse Jeneverfeesten, a Belgian celebration of gin and was enjoyed by all. In the coming year they are already looking forward to Easter in Kortrijk (also Belgium), closely followed by the Todmorden Folk Festival and of course Saddleworth Rushcart.

There has been little change with Manchester Morris Men. Still have 14 active dancers, and can turn out a North West side to most of their dance-outs. The two last joining members of about 2 and 4 years are 'up to speed' and in the past few weeks another newcomer has appeared at practice. However, they are still low on musicians, and have had to turn down some events because of this. In 2017 they hosted Cyprus Morris for a week in return for having spent a week as their guests in 2015. They have danced at 13 other events at weekends, 7 of which were fee-paying; plus 15 weekday evenings dancing outside local hostelries, etc.

John O'Gaunt Morris are now able to see some light at the end of the tunnel. They are returning to their roots and reverting to once more become a "rapper team". The lads have been practicing hard and it is hoped that their first public performance will be at their annual tour of South Lakeland on Good Friday. This year the "John O' Gaunt

Good Friday Tour" will be a special one as they will be celebrating their 50th anniversary. They are hope to be joined, as usual, by "Southport Swords" who are also celebrating their 50 years of existence. Other guest teams invited are "Stone The Crows" and "Yon Lot". They are still in need of new members so if anyone reading this who is moving to Lancashire they would be pleased to welcome them, especially if they are under retirement age! They are hopefully to get a teenage member soon, this being dependent on Derek Humphrey's grandson being accepted at the university.

This year is Royal Preston Morris Dancers 40th Anniversary and they are hoping to have a couple of events in celebration. One is on July 1st at Clitheroe where Ripon City Morris Dancers will join them with whom they have a good relationship and will be based around Clitheroe-a suitable halfway venue; the rest of the season is currently being put together. They attend the Grange-over-Sands Edwardian Festival in early June also celebrate the Longest Day with a Dance-Out on the earliest Thursday Evening in Croston along with Stone-the -Crows Border Morris and other guest Teams. This year they have been invited for the first time to Waddington, again near Clitheroe, for their Annual Duck Race Weekend. In August they are booked to appear at the village of Higham's Scarecrow Festival and during September plan to have a Day of Morris in the City of Preston with a few Guests, as part of the 40th year celebrations.

They are fortunate to have a new Member join earlier this month who has danced with a Cotswold Sides previously and will shortly be able to dance out

In addition to actual Dance-Outs and Practices they have completed a number of Workshops over the last year or so on behalf of Lancashire County Council, teaching local school children and giving them an insight into the Traditions of Morris-particularly North West of course.

In 2017 Adlington Morris Men had fewer dance out requests than the previous year however, they did managed to dance out about 12 times at various events and evening pub dance outs. They had an excellent day out at the JMO in Leicester along with their annual pilgrimage to the Cotswolds in October where they were joined by Pebworth MM and Belle D'Vain ladies North West sides at the Fleece Inn, Bretforton. They performed the Alderley Mummers play on 3 nights around Christmas, along with a Souling and Easter play. Membership stands at around 9, but this has grown at the back end of 2017 with not one, but two new members! Both are fresh into the Morris having never tried it before and are picking it up very well. One was via social media / Morris Ring website, the other as a friend of one of the existing members who came along having been cajoled by his wife, and loved it so much, returned. So keeping all recruitment avenues open, and being super friendly on practice nights really does pay off.

2017 Chester city Morris Men followed a similar course to the previous few years. They had a flurry of activity in April and May followed by sporadic activity over the summer. Celebrating St George's Day in their usual fashion by dancing in the centre of Chester with local team Kinnerton Morris Men. The programme ensured that they all finished up at their favourite public house but sadly this year the Landlord missed the event because of illness. This was duly reported by the local newspaper and included a quote from the Landlord's hospital bed:

"I may be in hospital but I'm doing my best to celebrate St George's Day". Chester Folk Festival continues to thrive and there was a good turnout for the dancing displays and North West workshop. Lack of men and difficulties guaranteeing a full dancing team restricted their summer programme to one event and no weekends away. Unfortunately, because of a diary malfunction they also missed our usual end of season outing to the White Hart Ale. Practices continue to be well attended and they are even looking through their back catalogue of dances to resurrect one or two for the coming year. Planning is under way for St George's Day and hopefully a few more outings over the summer.

Paul Cross (N)

Report not available

Brian Pollard (NE)

Still looking positive in the Northeast with sides enjoying their dancing and being generally well received by appreciative crowds of onlookers. We keep Morris in the public eye by engaging audiences, talking to people, enjoying what we are doing and dancing well!

The Sides:

Benfieldside. We have enjoyed a successful year with many productive practice nights leading to a very enjoyable dancing out season. Our excellent sharing relationship with the Durham Rams means numbers are steady at around fifteen dancers and three musicians allowing us to fulfil several engagements – Sedgfield Fair, Wolsingham Fair, Leeds MM Wharfedale tour, Otley Folk Festival and Richmond on Swale MM day of dance ending up with the highlight of the recent Plough Sunday when a large turnout watched dancing, playing and processing the plough up to the cathedral where the Dean blessed the plough and distributed "largesse" in the time honoured fashion!

Durham Rams. The side currently practises Morris with Benfieldside Morris Men so that the two sides are able to dance out together with the same dancing style and repertoire. A joint side also practises the Rapper dance. At the moment this is the Durham Rams dance based on the revival Hamsteels dance of the 1920's, but we have also begun to learn the dance previously done by Benfieldside.

We have had a number of engagements with Benfieldside over the past year. These include Sedgfield Fair, Wolsingham Fair, Leeds MM Wharfedale weekend and Otley Folk Festival, plus fortnightly danceouts on Wednesday evenings throughout the summer. The Rapper side also attended the annual St. George's Day Meeting of local rapper sides organised by Sallyport Sword Dancers.

These closer ties between Benfieldside and the Durham Rams have been extremely positive, and we hope to continue to develop them in the future.

Monkseaton Morris Men. We have had an interesting year although not much recruitment. We danced at a sword dance festival in St. Niklaas, Belgium in May and also at Westminster Morris Men's day of dance in London.

We were contacted by a cruise ship entertainment agent and were asked to perform on a German cruise ship docked on the Tyne in August. This involved two performances on separate nights. We did a 45 minute show with morris and sword dancing followed by some country dancing which enabled the audience to participate. We think it went down well and hope to get some repeat business.

New Year's Day 2018 was another excellent event with record crowds watching the show and in the pubs afterwards. The large collection has allowed us to make a donation of £800 to MacMillan nurses charity.

Richmond on Swale. Our year got underway in April with our attendance at Black Sheep's Day of Dance on St. George's Day, followed in May by our own Day in Richmond. Both events were successful with significant public interest. However, the highlight of the year was undoubtedly our attendance at the London Ring Meeting in July, not least because it was the first of such to be attended by several of our members. We were swept along with the energy and enthusiasm of the other sides and the large crowds along the Embankment.

Throughout the summer we danced out and sang, as usual, on Thursday evenings at a range of pubs in the area.

In September we attended the York Festival of Dance, which brought the enthusiasm of performing in front of a substantial audience, and will attend again in 2018.

This was another successful year for us, although there remains the ongoing concern to attract new members, both as dancers and musicians.

Pete Simpson (W Mids)

We have had a year of mixed fortunes in the West Midlands.

After more years than we care to remember Forest of Dean Morris Men, as a result of dwindling numbers, have decided to become a mixed side. While across the region at Ryton on Dunsmore in Warwickshire a new side is born, Knightlow Morris Men. It is still early days and they are receiving support from Anker & Jockey MM, but they have a kit, have been seen at a feast & have performed at a booking. So we wish them all the best for the future.

We have had a couple of significant birthdays as well. Faithful City celebrated their 50th birthday & Stafford their 60th. Both clubs marked the anniversaries in their own way. May they have many more.

Recruitment has been quiet over the last 12 months with nothing to report on top of last year. The initiatives mentioned last year seem to have stalled or run their natural course. A lesson to us all that we can never afford to stop working at recruitment.

In last year's report we were awaiting the Green Man EGM and their decision for the future. As you probably know by now, they decided to wind up the club. However, this has left a gap with no one to safeguard and drive on the Lichfield tradition. As a result some of us have kept the name of Green Man alive with the idea of reforming them, possibly as, a peripatetic club to run workshops and attend a few larger events. If you are interested please let me know, especially if you would be prepared to act as Bagman and / or treasurer as I may find myself a bit busy over the next couple of years.

This will be my last report to you as area rep as I am having to stand down due to becoming Squire Elect for the Morris Ring (so you ain't got rid of me yet). Mark Carter has been asked to step in to the breach. I have every confidence he will do a fine job, but I will let him introduce himself.

For those who don't know me, I'm squire/foreman at Leominster Morris and occasionally seen sporting Jockey colours. I have been in morris for 20 of my 30 years, learning initially at Stafford before moving to Herefordshire. I live in Hereford, but work in Worcester, and whilst love getting out to morris events, it is within the context of having a 4-year old and one on the way so free time will be limited! That said, there will be plenty of sleepless nights in which to answer emails so if you have any queries or want assistance or signposting with anything you are doing/wish to do then just drop me a line on mt.carter@live.co.uk and you'll also find me behind the LM social media pages on facebook & twitter. I look forward to corresponding with/meeting you in the near future.

Ben Robinson (N Mids)

Report not available

Roger Comley (S Mids)

The season of Ales and Feasts is well upon us and for those sides still willing to host these events, even with falling numbers occasionally, they are still a joy to attend.

Please help the Bagmen by saying 'yes' when possible and communicate early enough to enable some new men and women to experience the fun.

Anniversaries of sides are good to celebrate and Whitchurch have some places left for sides and individuals 29th June – 1st July.

I will help the new Squire of the Ring as his fool.

N Strudwick (E)

2017 was a very busy year professionally for me (apparently I was away from home almost a third of the year) and I did not get round to sending out any questionnaires this time; for the same reason I never got to visit any of the sides except where we came into contact at the regular Morris events like Ales and so on. That said, I am not aware of any seismic changes to sides in my area over the last year either.

The issue of “blacking up” reared its ugly head earlier in 2017. It directly affects only a couple of Eastern sides who exist as border/molly teams, but several others do a little border during the winter so I did sound them all out. Not surprisingly, there was almost universal exasperation on how the media and other vested interests have interpreted it, but I was not made aware of anyone who was intending to change their practices. I was approached for a short interview by Radio Essex on the occasion of a planned visit by Good Easter Molly Gang where I repeated the Ring/Open line, but I have no idea if any was broadcast.

No-one has indicated anything particular that they want drawn to the Ring’s attention that is not already on the agenda. Obviously the early part of 2018 has seen checking in with sides about whether they are coming to the ARM and whether they have any strong feelings one way or the other on the Leicester MM motion that is going to dominate the event. I have not heard from every club by any means, but where I have (and that includes public postings that everyone will have seen) I sense that there is a broad sense of inevitable acceptance in the East, along with understanding of where the motion is coming from, with the proviso that every side that has put forward a view has indicated that it intends to stay male dancer only.

Cliff Marchant (SE)

I met with Victory and Men of Wight on VMM day of dance, VMM are managing to get a full side out but the MoW said they are struggling to get men out to dance on a regular basis. Also met up with Hartley MM always a busy side , Ales etc, one of the stronger sides in my area, I attended Broadwood day of dance with Chanctonbury Ring North West side, as usual a very enjoyable annual open event, but both all three sides need new members otherwise their future is unsure. Although Chanctonbury have gained an apprentice, the side moved their practises back to Shoreham and decided to do a leaflet drop in the area , two new men came to a practice, one danced out on Boxing Day. I danced with King Johns NW side at Hastings Jack in the Green, K J seem to be maintaining a healthy membership, Martlet MM are also managing to keep busy, Longman MM were back in Orleans France for two days during the summer, they will be celebrating 40 years this year, they have also gained two apprentices, hopefully they will stay.

Winchester MM have some new men dancing and the side is looking confident, they are always a joy to watch, they also organise a very enjoyable winter feast. Winchester are also

one of the mainstays of the MRing jigs weekend with Geoff Jerram organising and Ian cooking, with others demonstrating the jigs.

Ravensbourne held a very successful Ring meeting in the Capital, they seem to maintain a healthy membership.

The display boards have only been used twice during the summer.

East Surrey helped to run a Fieldtown instructional, one that was open to all, Winchester were involved with an open jigs instructional, neither of these events were MRing events but called on Ring sides to help.

I have not heard of any side folding but I do know some are really struggling to get enough men out to dance each week, the common denominator is an aging membership, even with sides doing well.

I have emailed sides asking them to vote at this meeting a 'yes or no but make sure you vote.'
Concludes my last report as area rep.

P Reece (SW & W)

Sides are generally in good health, regularly performing Morris in addition to seasonal Mumming and a rise in Wassail attendances. Success stories are Sweyn's Ey, who 5 years ago were on the verge of folding, and Helier and West Somerset who have moved to Border in a successful attempt to raise numbers to survive. Gloucestershire now have a mixed side alongside the men and West Somerset have a male Morris Ring Cotswold side and an Open Morris mixed Border side, to comply with the current Morris Ring Constitution. At the time of this report, most sides have begun serious discussions on the Leicester motion prior to a formal decision being taken. So far 5 sides are clearly in favour of the motion.

Bourne River completed 50 dances in 50 locations during their 50th with their 16 active members, but have no new recruits.

Bathampton have enjoyed a good season, including a visit to Prague, with 16 active members out of 32 and 2 new recruits.

Bristol have 20 members, mainly over 60, and have scaled down performances to every couple of weekends.

Chalice average 12 at practice and have had 3 new recruits of which 2 have remained. They have 7 musicians and the side performs weekly.

Dartington have had a good year gaining a recruit in preparation for this year's 50th. They have 15 regular dancers, 5 musicians, 1 fool and 1.5 horses performing weekly during the summer and 6 to 7 outings during the winter months. Repertoire comprises about 30 dances and 4 jigs, of these 6 dances and 1 jig are from the Filkins tradition.

Gloucestershire have a full programme of weekly dancing, including seasonal Mumming and Wassailing they have 2 new recruits and have formed a mixed side alongside the men. They are in favour of constitutional change.

Helier have 5 orchards and a 20 year long tradition of Wassailing with 8 active dancers and 2 new recruits following a change from Cotswold to Border. They support constitutional change.

Mendip have a membership of 30 with an active core of 12 to 15 performing a full programme. No new recruits.

North Curry Mummers have 10 members drawing crowds of around 200. They are in favour of constitutional change.

Plymouth have a core of 8 to 12 active dancers, 5 to 7 musicians and a very full programme of dancing and Mumming. We dance Cotswold and our own Plymouth tradition. Nautical events such as Pirates Day, Trafalgar Day and Pickle Night are celebrated. Recruitment and the raising of new sides during the lead up to perform at Mayflower 400 and Plymouth's 50th in 2020 is the current goal and hopefully the goal for all those Morris sides of the South and East coasts and East Midlands and beyond with Mayflower connections. Plymouth will be voting for changing the constitution.

Sweyn's Ey, the only MR Morris side now left in Wales, have experienced a renaissance with now 12 dancers and 4 musicians providing a full weekly Summer programme. They are unanimous for constitutional change.

Taunton Dean have 18 members performing Morris during the Summer and at Wassails.

Trigg have 12 to 15 active dancers, performing Cotswold in a full Summer programme, and with Mumming at Winter and at a regular Wassail booking. Some members also perform with the mixed Tywardreath team also dancing Cotswold. Despite the distances Trigg regularly attends Ring meetings.

Uplyme have 10 dancers (male) and 5 musicians (mixed) performing Cotswold and Border 20 times on average during the Summer, including their June Morris Festival and 6 times during the Winter within 40 miles of Uplyme.

West Somerset have 17 members of which 5 are active and have had no new recruits. The side has divided into two dance groups, one of which is a mixed Open Border side.

Wyvern Jubilee in their 40th year have 17 active members who dance out every Thursday during the season.

14) Motion for Constitutional Change

Proposed by Leicester MM:

Motion for Morris Ring A.R.M. March 2018: The Future of the Morris Ring

Aim: To ensure that the Morris Ring is credible, relevant and representative of morris in the future.

The proposed revised Objects and Definitions would be:

- 1. The object of the Morris Ring shall be to encourage the performance of the Morris, to maintain its traditions and to preserve its history; to bring into contact all the Morris Clubs or Teams. The purpose of the Morris Ring is not to replace or supersede the existing organisations, but to sub-serve them. The Clubs shall in all respects retain their independence.*
- 2. The Morris Ring shall be an association of Morris, Sword and Mummers Clubs and Teams. Any established Club or Team which meets regularly for Morris or Sword Dancing or Mumming, and endeavours to uphold the standards and dignity of the Morris, shall be eligible for Membership of the Morris Ring.*

Proposed Charlie Corcoran Leicester Morrismen December 2017

Note: The bulk of the debate on this subject has been conducted for the benefit of the entire membership via the Morris Ring Google Group (summarised in Appendix 2). There will be a maximum of six people permitted to speak for up to two minutes each, three in favour of the motion and three against. The first speaker will be Charlie Corcoran on behalf of Leicester MM, proposing the motion. Other speakers will self-nominate on the morning of the ARM before the Area Meetings. In the event that there are more than two others wishing to speak in favour of the motion, and/or more than three wishing to speak against, the speakers will be selected by the Returning Officer drawing names from an appropriate receptacle in each case; this will be conducted immediately after the Area Meetings and before lunch.

15) Future Events Diary

19th May **JMO Day of Dance, Peterborough**

Hosted by Crosskey Clog (Open Morris), details to follow. Ten places available. Applications received to date from Grimsby, Rutland, Peterborough, Jockey, Anstey, Letchworth, Foresters and Ripley.

1st – 3rd June **Thaxted weekend of dance**

Please apply directly to Thaxted Morris Men.

8th – 10th June

Hartley Morris Ale Ring Meeting (meeting no 357)

The Hartley Morris Men will be holding their annual Ale in the format of a traditional Morris Ring Meeting (but without a Church service). The weekend will be based in the village of Wrotham (Kent), as it has for the past 40 years, commencing on the Friday evening with a hot supper plus free beer in the hall and singing/music sessions in the local pubs. After a full English breakfast Saturday morning there will be two tours by classic transport taking in local breweries, pub lunches and the Kent countryside. An early evening informal massed display will be followed by a lavish Feast provided by our regular chef and his team from the Belladonna Pie Company.

After a full English breakfast on Sunday morning we depart to dance at various sites in the nearby town of Tonbridge where there will be another chance for all sides to come together for a final informal display prior to a cooked lunch.

Accommodation, with hot showers provided, is indoor camping and a secure campsite; female musicians are welcome and the anticipated cost will be in the region of £79 per person. It will also be a bit more relaxed than previous events. Numbers are limited to 85 on a first come basis so early applications are advisable and must be received by 1st February 2018.

Interested sides are therefore requested to submit applications by email to bagman@themorrisring.org and bagman@hartleymorrismen.org.uk stating name of the side, estimated numbers and contact details (phone No. & email address). Further details/enquiries, email - events@hartleymorrismen.org.uk

23rd – 24th June

Helmond Ring Meeting (meeting no 358)

This will be a repeat of the very successful 2015 Ring Meeting. In order to keep costs down (Brexit has led to a fall in the value of the pound) there will be a walking tour in the city of Helmond (cars will be used to transport sticks etc. and to provide transport for needy dancers). The meeting will be based at a museum for historical agricultural implements. There is one single-sex sleeping room, plenty of outdoor camping, museum toilets (male and female) and a trailer with shower cubicles. Meals etc. will be in one of the exhibition rooms and there is an outside area for dancing. There are several city centre hotels for those who prefer this (details on the website).

The Saturday tour will visit the market, the harbour, the castle and shopping streets. On Sunday there will be an indoor show at another museum (this time for barrel organs). The meeting is open to all Ring sides. Numbers are limited to 100. The cost

of the meeting will be €75 per person and it is up to bagmen to choose when to transfer the money (subject to date limits). Applications by email to bagman@themorrisring.org stating name of the side and estimated numbers.

Details will be regularly updated on www.helmondmorris.nl

29th June – 1st July **Whitchurch celebration weekend**

In 2018 Whitchurch Morris Men will be celebrating our 70th Anniversary of formation. From the small beginning of two families of brothers, who enjoyed country dancing, thinking they would like to give Morris Dancing a try, and progressing so well that Whitchurch MM were elected to join the Morris Ring in 1949, the side is still thriving and attempting to promote the Morris, and demonstrate good dancing, and fun!

We are planning a special weekend to celebrate our 70th Anniversary, and we would like to invite your side to be part of our celebrations, because you have been part of what we are, certainly in the past decade, although some sides have been involved with us for many more years than that.

Because we are aware that some sides, we have been involved with, have changed over the years, and, for example, do not now belong to the Morris Ring, whilst others are not members of the Morris Ring, we are planning the weekend in such a way that ALL Morris sides are welcome to join us for this celebration.

We have secured excellent accommodation at the Stoke Mandeville Stadium [which is the National Centre for Disability Sport in the UK] in Guttman Rd, Aylesbury HP21 9PP, which can accommodate, probably, any number who wish to join us. Overnight, there is single sex dormitory accommodation, or, upgrades to twin room accommodation will be possible, all with linen and showers included. Those using the accommodation get free use of the gym, swimming pool and tennis courts (dependent on availability). For those wishing to bring their caravan or motorhome, there will be space on the carpark.

The full weekend will start on Friday evening, with tea and coffee provided, a bar, and opportunities to meet and greet. On Saturday following a full cooked breakfast there will be dancing tours, including lunch, in and around the Vale of Aylesbury and the Chilterns. In the evening, there will be a formal Feast, with speeches and party pieces, and dancing. On Sunday, after cooked breakfast, we will move to the centre of Aylesbury, for a Church service, followed by Massed Morris dancing, and departure after lunch.

The cost for the full weekend will be £95 for all accommodation, food, tour travel, etc., The rate for the twin room upgrade will be £130. For those unable to join us

for the full weekend, the cost will be as follows: Saturday tour, lunch and Feast £43; Saturday tour and lunch £16; Saturday Feast £28; Sunday lunch £10.

We would like to receive expressions of interest, to join us, as soon as possible, Send to info@whitchurchmorris.org.uk

25th – 26th August **Saddleworth Rushcart Ring Meeting (meeting no 359)**

This is open to all; no need to apply via the Bagman, please inform the Rushcart Secretary of your interest directly.

16) Date and Venue of Next ARM

17) AOB

Items of Any Other Business to be submitted to the Bagman of the Ring by post or email before 1st March please; items submitted on the day will only be considered by exception and if time permits.



Appendix 1 – Application form for the ARM

The Morris Ring – Annual Representatives’ Meeting Sat 10th March 2018

Name of Side:

Contact Name:

Names of other attendees:
...../.....

Email: Tel No:

Address:
..... Postcode:

Saturday: Workshops: No of men: _____

Saturday ARM to Sunday morning incl. Sat night accommodation & Sunday breakfast (£25 per person shared twin room)	No@ £ 70	£
Saturday Breakfast (for campers* & early arrivals)	No@ £ 8.50	£
Saturday ARM - including feast (No accommodation)	No@ £45	£
Saturday ARM* - excluding feast (Morning Coffee / Lunch / Afternoon Tea)	No@ £25	£
Feast only	No@ £30	£
ARM only - no meals	No.....@ Free	£ 0.00
Sunday Breakfast (for campers/vans*)	No@ £ 8.50	£
TOTAL		£ .

* There is very limited camping available (for which there will be a small charge). It is essential to book in advance through Peter Copley. There is space for up to five campervans at the venue at a cost of £15 for the weekend (2 nights) on a first come first served basis. Please book this directly with Peter Copley. There are 20 twin bedded rooms and 5 double bedded rooms. Book early to get a twin room!

Please specify number of non-alcohol drinkers

Please specify how many require vegetarian meals.....

Please indicate if disabled access is required Yes / No

Please print this form, fill it in and post it (with a cheque for the requisite amount) made payable to:
Stafford Morris Men (Misdemeanours) to:

Peter Copley, 5, Woodleighton Grove, Uttoxeter, Staffs., ST14 8BX

Appendix 2 - Short report on the Morris Ring Google Group consultation

This report can only ever be a brief round-up of the posts made during the consultation period. There can be no substitute for reading the posts made by the contributors, and I would encourage all to do so. The posts remain on the google group and if you do not already have access, please contact myself or Jon Melville as Morris Ring Bagman who can arrange this for you.

As a consequence, and to make this document as practically useful as possible, I have picked out a small number of key themes or issues that arose from the submissions. I have grouped these into topics for ease and annotated with my comments.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the contributors for their input and the constructive manner in which posts were made. I am pleased to say that no submissions were rejected according to the published moderation guidelines. I hope this document is of use.

- **Merger of the 3 main Morris Organisations**

The point was made by a number of people that if Leicester's proposal was adopted, that it would be inevitable that the 3 Organisations would then merge, e.g.:-

(Brian Tasker) *"My reason for favouring the change in the constitution is that it improves the chances of the three morris organisations amalgamating"*

Mike Wilkinson had a different take:-

"Any organisation exists first and foremost for its existing members. Ongoing recruitment is good for the existing members, and is therefore to be encouraged. We shouldn't make the change with one eye to a future merger with one or both of the other organisations"

Paul Cross posted in reply that despite the Morris Federation and Open Morris having a similar make up of sides and common policy on membership since 1982, they have not merged yet:

"The Fed and the Open are already very similar.... (but are) two separate organisations.

There is no evidence that a mixed Ring would merge with the other two organisations, based purely on the fact that the two existing similar organisations have not merged"

Comment:-

The JMO is more properly called 'the committee of the Joint Morris Organisations'. That is to say they are 3 independent Organisations coming together to form a committee to discuss matters of common interest and to purchase public liability insurance. There is no separate entity called the 'JMO' it is a shortening of its true title for convenience. Each JMO national

day of dance is in fact organised by one of the 3 Organisations in turn, not by the committee or a joint body.

Leicester's proposal is of course about internal change, not external relations with other bodies. It does not seek a mandate for such a merger, nor suggest that it should take place. Indeed no such proposal has been made by anyone for an ARM to consider. In any event, such a course of action would require all 3 Organisations to have such a mandate from their membership. Again not something that is in place or proposed.

- **Maintenance of tradition**

There were a number of personal observations on this, admittedly very wide, topic. These were on the history of the Morris Ring, or quality of dance. However an interesting view on perception of these things came from Andrew Morris, (Monkseaton MM):-

“What is interesting is those wanting to keeping “the tradition” unchanged are very selective on which part of “the tradition” they are being precious about. They want to retain the male element however they make no reference to making sure the dances are danced with skill and vigour, which sadly is not the case with some of the Ring sides these days. Surely if the Morris Ring stood for “the tradition” it needs to make sure the dances are danced as they always have been.

The Morris ring has resisted the change from male only dancers and look where it has got it. 10 years ago my niece watched a Ring meeting she commented that she had never seen so many old men gathered in one place before. I would suspect that the average age has not got any less in the last 10 years.

Monkseaton Morris Men will likely to remain men only for rapper, longsword and Cotswold but are not against the proposed change to the constitution.

One final point - history will show that if you try and freeze a folk tradition at one moment in time, it will dies out. Folk traditions have and always will evolve”

Comment

The issue of the quality of dance is a key concern for all. As I have said elsewhere, I would be referring many issues to the Advisory Council after the ARM. If Leicester's motion were successful, then this would be a central issue for the Advisory Council to address.

I am on record as to the key values I believe the Morris Ring does and should stand for, and the consequences of not living in the present day. Many contributors gave their own opinion on Morris, but for a conclusion on the origins and purpose of the Morris Ring I can do no better than turn to John Jenner of Cambridge Morris Men, the senior member of our founding club:-

“The resident and still active full members of the Cambridge Morris Men support the proposed amendment to the Morris Ring Constitution. Broadly for the reasons set out by the Leicester MM which I will not repeat here. However that does not mean that we will not remain a men only dancing side and we have no intention of having women dancers, (at least for the foreseeable future.) However times and general attitudes to women, particularly in a young University town (we are a town & gown club) have changed and we support the necessity for the Ring, as the leading and oldest national body, to accept all Morris and related clubs, but which will remain with their own constitutions and traditions.

When the Cambridge Morris Men was formed in the early 1920’s there were no separate women’s clubs, although the EFDS had many woman teachers and held open classes. One of the main reasons for the founding of the Club and particularly the Travelling Morrice in 1924 was to get away from the continuous indoor instructions and repetitive learning of the dances as collected and recorded by Cecil Sharp, by the EFDS, together with exams etc.

In 1934 when the Ring was founded, as an organisation to enable the separate clubs to get together and by mutual contact to raise and maintain the standards of the morris.....Over the last 40 years the whole outlook on life has changed and of the clubs which were formed in the 1970’s in the great folk revivalmany, but thankfully not all, have become older and do not provide the good active and lively shows by young men, but merely go through the movements without rising off the ground.

The change to the Morris Ring Constitution is not going, to produce young men (or women) or substantially reduce the dancing age group and improve the overall standard, overnightbut if the Ring remains apparently old fashioned and aloof, then the men’s morris, which we all want and admire will suffer, and become “club” for an even smaller group of idealistic traditionalists.

As the Founding club and also the inspiration behind the Advisory Council, the CMM is fully supportive of the moves to bring the Ring into the present century”

- How sides may react to a decision and a side’s autonomy

There was much personal comment about how sides may react if their view on the proposal did not prevail. Talk of division or sides wishing to leave was mentioned. Only sides themselves can answer that. However, I do believe unity behind a decision will be a necessary outcome whatever it may be. That an organisation such as the Morris Ring has a spectrum of views should surprise none of us. We have a democratic process to decide questions as they arise, as we have done for over 80 years.

Cliff Marchant put this into its proper perspective better than anyone:-

“If the proposal re ladies dancing is passed and the sides who are fervently against it wish to leave where do they go? Do they form yet another organisation? I would prefer them to stay in the Morris Ring fight their corner and uphold what they believe in from continuing their membership rather than being on the outside. United the MR sides show that they can face change but still uphold individual ideals and MR values.”

I made clear in the Q&A document issued with the recent Bagman’s newsletter that change in the Constitution, does not mean a side will have to change. All member sides of the Morris Ring are independent and manage their own affairs. They would not need to change.

- Conclusion

I have made public my comments on Leicester’s proposal. The values that the Morris Ring stands to uphold of bringing sides together, promoting new sides to form, carrying forward the Morris traditions and working to perform them to the best standard possible, are universal. They are not defined, or dependent on the gender of dancers. The Morris world today amply demonstrates that.

Some have suggested it is a ‘moderniser’ versus ‘traditionalist’ decision. It is not.

It is a question of whether the Morris Ring wishes to embrace and share these values we stand for with all, to bring our talents to help shape the future of Morris. Or should we turn away and see our history and the value we can bring to the Morris world become a forgotten irrelevance.

The consultation held via the Google Group has given all the opportunity to debate this proposal. I am glad that so many have done so and in a thoughtful and constructive way. I know many clubs are also having internal discussions regarding their stance on the proposal and this will continue to be the case in the coming weeks. Social media has also provided a forum for open debate. The procedure at the ARM is designed to allow for speeches to sum up that debate, both for and against, in a way that is balanced and concise for those who choose to be present.

This is the question Leicester’s proposal raises for us to answer.

Ed Worrall, Squire of the Morris Ring

Appendix 3 - Proxy voting procedure for sides unable to attend the ARM

Please read carefully to avoid invalidating your proxy vote.

1. A side unable to attend the ARM applies to the Bagman of the Morris Ring by email for a proxy voting form, which will be sent by return.
2. The side nominates a proxy who will be in attendance at the ARM. *Sides may NOT nominate the Bagman of the Morris Ring, who will administrate the process, Past Squire Geoff Jerram who will be Returning Officer, or Web Editor Pete de Courcy, who will be Verifier for the process.*
3. Please obtain the agreement of your chosen proxy and ensure that they will be attending the ARM.
4. The side completes the proxy voting form and sends it to their nominee with the instruction on how to vote. The side emails the Bagman of the Morris Ring with the name of the person nominated on their behalf. *Please do not communicate your voting intentions to anyone other than your nominee.*
5. On the day, a voting paper for the side will be issued to the proxy nominee on presentation of the form and they will vote on behalf of that side. *One person may be nominee for multiple sides. The Bagman of the Morris Ring will check proxy names against those supplied by sides.*
6. In the event of a side having nominated a proxy and subsequently being in attendance at the ARM, the proxy will be cancelled, providing notification of this has been received by the Bagman of the Morris Ring at least ten minutes before the start of the meeting.
7. In the event of a nominee being unable to attend the ARM, any proxy votes they carry can be transferred to the Squire of the Morris Ring to cast, providing this is achieved at least 24 hours before the ARM commences.