

Open Morris Annual General Meeting 2019

**Sunday 3rd Nov 2019
Arborfield Village Hall**

1. Opening of AGM, notices, & introduction by Chairperson

Meeting opened at 13.35.

NP welcomed everyone and announced that the meeting was quorate, with 20 Member sides represented. NP thanked Theale Tattoo for organising and hosting the workshop, lunch and meeting, and welcomed the Morris Ring and Morris Federation representatives. PS (The Morris Ring) and JW (The Morris Federation) have kindly agreed to act as tellers for the voting. JC will be taking minutes. Michael Stimpson, who is the JMO Insurance Officer, has offered to answer any queries about insurance during or after the meeting.

2. Attendance and apologies for absence

In attendance:

John Melville, Bagman, The Morris Ring
Pete Simpson, Squire, The Morris Ring
Jerry West, Notation Officer, The Morris Federation
Beorma Morris – Tony Roberts
Billy No Mates – Eddie Carter
Borderline Morris – Kevin Godley
Brooms Bricks and Bowlers – Liz Scholey (LS)
Bunnies from Hell – Jen Cox (JC)
Devils Jumps Clog – Clare Mach (CM)
Earl of Stamford – Nicki Pickering (NP)
Far Side Morris – Mike Roberts
Fenstanton – Robin James (RJ)
Fowlers Molly- Chris Lamb (CL)
Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts - Peter de Courcy
Lepton Morris – Charlotte Pascoe
Meon Valley Morris – Pamela Eastwood
Phoenix Morris – Michael Stimpson, Sue Stimpson
Roses are Red – John Scholey (JS)
Shinfield Shambles – Hilary Tindall, Kerry Mortimer
The Acid Morris – Naomi Standen
Theale Tattoo – Rachel Beck
Wharfedale Wayzgoose – Malcolm Hills (MH)
Whitethorn Morris – Ellie Nutkins

In advance of the meeting, apologies were received from the following Members:

Sides:

Allington
Anderida
AnnieMation
Bedcote
Beltane

Braybrooke
Corby Conspiracy
Cracken Morris
Crosskey Clog
Fishbone Ash
Flagcrackers of Craven
Flash Company
Heartsease
Holt Ridge
Kenninghall Morris
Kitchen Taps Appalachian
Mr Baker's Dozen
Rattlejag
Wolfgate
Yorkshire Coast
Young Miscellany

Individual, Life and Honorary Members:

Ann Baines
Diana Barclay
Mike Barclay
Wendy Bostock
John Clifford
Chris Hall
Kim Woodward

3. Minutes of AGM 2018

Minutes of the 2018 AGM were taken as read, with no comments.

Appendix 1 – 2018 Minutes

4. Adoption of Minutes of AGM 2018

Minutes adopted by consensus of the meeting.

5. Matters arising from the Minutes

i) 5.8.d – Side constitution template. The committee had attempted to locate the old constitution template, but had been unable to do so. Beorma Morris had submitted a constitution template, which has been uploaded to the website and is free to use. Thanks to Beorma and Norm Warren for their work towards this. Tony Roberts of Beorma also offered assistance to any sides who were having trouble writing a constitution.

iii) 9 – Area Rep Guidelines – these have been created and are now posted on the website under Open Morris Documents.

v) 14 – JMO DoD checklist – as a result of our involvement with the JMO DoD 2018, NP had created a checklist to help any team who organise a JMO or large DoD, which is now available on the website. Thanks to Jenny Everett of the Morris Federation who has also helped with the preparation of this document.

vi) 15.c – JMO DoD categorisation. There was a discussion at the JMO AGM, as a result of which it is confirmed that only National DoDs would be considered to be JMO events, and the terms 'Regional JMO DoD' and 'National JMO DoD' were therefore obsolete.

vii) 16.a – JMO DoD rotation. Note that the JMO DoD will indeed be hosted by OM in 2021 as per the original rotation.

6. Officers' Reports (taken as read), Officers' comments, and queries from the floor:

a. Chair of OM

Michael Stimpson of Phoenix Morris expressed a vote of thanks to NP for her excellent stewardship of the last few years, taking into account the difficulties at the start of her tenure. This was agreed by all present.

Appendix 2 – Chair's Report

b. Membership Secretary

JS elaborated on his report. OM is bigger than it was a year ago, but not by a great deal. Ten Lords Morris have not renewed so are assumed to be defunct. West Somerset Border were planning to leave now that Morris Ring membership was open to them as a mixed side; they saw the duplication of insurance as an unnecessary expense. JS had suggested that our new Associate Membership category would suit them well, but had received no reply. One potential new joiner, Redway Morris, had been sent a new member form but not followed it up. A few teams have renewed without sending anything in the post, which is great. Teams are renewing by bank transfer or standing order. One team has set up a recurring standing order which may be a useful feature in the future.

Tony Roberts of Beorma drew attention to new Member Side So Xsighted, who are a partially sighted side – Eddie Carter of Billy no Mates pointed out that he is a whole side by himself as he dances solo, and is partially sighted! JS said that we do not collect that sort of information about our member sides, but we are aware of the status of these teams. Eddie Carter said he wished So Xsighted all the best.

NP said that when she took over as Chair in Jan 2016 we had previously dropped membership catastrophically, so it's really good to see membership increasing.

JS drew attention to the fact that members can update their own contact details via the website. If any member needs their link re-sending, please contact us.

Appendix 3 – Membership Secretary's Report

c. Secretary

Taken as read.

Appendix 4 – Secretary's Report

d. Web Officer

MH: The OM website is a large site, so if you ever see anything wrong with the website please let me know, as there's no other way of discovering any problems. Thank you to those who have pointed things out. I am always open to suggestions for the website, please let me know if you have anything to suggest.

Appendix 5 – Web Officer's Report

e. Treasurer

LS: The accounts look very healthy, but caution is advised. We have a surplus this year, due to the lack of a printed magazine, and not hosting the JMO DOD. A small surplus soon disappears, as last year resulting in a small loss of £27.

We have discussed the issue of reserves a number of times at the AGM and amongst officers. We have over £14,000 without the ringfenced SDA fund, and OM is just breaking even. The question therefore arises as to whether we should spend some of the money. Advice has been sought from Steven Archer, our independent reviewer, and he was able to give some insight into reserves held by the other organisations. The Morris Ring has huge reserves, and the Morris Federation keep 2.8 x their annual income. Stephen Archer advised keeping around 2.5 x our annual turnover in reserve, around £10k, which would give us around £5000 we could spend on initiatives. It must be something considered as worthwhile, as we will only have this money to spend once.

I recommend subscription rates stay the same. There has been discussion about using the reserve to reduce subs, but as this would be unlikely to attract more sides, it would be a waste of the money,

I recommend no change to the mileage rate for expenses.

The Sue Dyke Award fund should remain a separate ringfenced item within the accounts. CM asked what the 'PRS' item shown in the accounts is - LS explained that this is the pro rata contribution to the JMO's Performing Rights Society licence, which licences the playing of music.

Naomi Standen of The Acid Morris asked what would be the return for investing the surplus? LS said that at current rates this would be less than 1% a year.

CL raised the presentation of subscription rates. Should the early bird offer disappear and there be a £10 supplement for paying late? LS agrees this would be a better presentation in the future.

Tony Roberts of Beorma said that the idea of having an early rate and an ordinary one is psychologically better than penalising people for late payment, and said he has experience of this working the other way.

NP said we used to have a problem with chasing members for late payment. JS clarified that 'early bird' term is a nickname only.

CL said it's a question of perception to potential members, and knew of one team who thought OM was more expensive than the Morris Federation, although the rates are the same.

NP said careful thought about the wording is needed before the next renewal period.

Michael Stimpson of Phoenix Morris, speaking as the JMO Insurance Officer, pleaded guilty to introducing the 'early bird' concept to JMO membership renewals, as he'd suggested early payment discount after a previous Morris Ring treasurer had wished to fine late paying sides.

Appendix 6 – Treasurer's Report

Action: Committee to alter presentation of subscription rates on website and in renewal paperwork.

f. Adoption of Treasurer's report

All in favour. Signed by NP and MH.

7. Other Officials' Reports (taken as read), and queries from the floor

a. Editor of Dancing On! - Jenny Cox

Mike Roberts of The Far Side: Is it necessary to produce a printed edition of DO?

CM: Members of my side really aren't computer literate, and they need a paper copy.

Michael Stimpson: Phoenix belong to an organisation who give the opportunity to choose which type.

CL: Publicity value of printed copy can't be devalued.

MH: I put a copy in our local library and it does get looked at.

Mike Roberts: A printed edition is a nice thing to have, but I'm talking about the proportion of our income spent.

JC: The value of publicity can't be quantified, we've been able to use the magazines to raise awareness of OM in many different contexts in the last couple of years. I like the accessibility of offering multiple formats, as we do also publish the magazine on the website and across social media.

Michael Stimpson: What about cutting back to one edition?

Action: Committee to discuss printed editions of DO at AOM.

b. Area Representatives:

NP introduced our new ARs CM and CL to the meeting, and said that MH would happily step down as Area Rep in the North East if someone with more time was interested in taking on the role.

West Midlands – Craig Simmonds

Taken as read.

Wales & North West – Nicki Pickering

Taken as read.

East Anglia – Robin James

Taken as read.

South East – Chris Lamb

CL had been unable to submit a written report as he'd struggled to get feedback from sides in the SE area, but he did receive heartening feedback from Roses are Red, a junior team who reported that they had been very successfully recruiting members, and were in a very healthy condition, having previously been on the verge of folding. NP said this is very encouraging and shows that we are succeeding, and pointed out that this year's SDA winner is a member of Roses are Red.

Central – Jenny Cox

Taken as read.

South Central – Clare Mach

Taken as read.

Appendix 7 – Officials' Reports

8. Election of Officers:

- a. Chair – Jen Cox (proposed by Wicket Brood and seconded by Earl of Stamford)
- b. Membership Secretary – John Scholey (proposed by Brooms Bricks and Bowlers and seconded by Lepton Morris)
- c. Secretary – Lucy Simmonds (proposed by Theale Tattoo and seconded by Cadi Ha)
- d. Treasurer – Liz Scholey (proposed by Brooms Bricks and Bowlers and seconded by Borderline Morris)
- e. Web Officer – Malcolm Hills (proposed by Wharfedale Wayzgoose and seconded by Theale Tattoo)

6 sides had cast Absentee Votes in advance of the meeting. All Officers were elected unanimously, with 26 votes for, none against, and no abstentions.

9. Appointment of Officials

NP was pleased to announce that two new officials have been appointed by the Committee. Sam Davey is our new SW Area Rep, a post which has been vacant for a number of years, and Conor Smith (the 2018 SDA winner) is going to take over as Magazine Editor. This shows a great measure of success for the SDA competition. No objections to these appointments were made.

10. Appointment of Independent Reviewer

Steven Archer is happy to continue in this role, he is very experienced and has done a good job up to now. LS finds him easy and very convenient to work with. No objections.

11. Nominations for Honorary / Life Membership

NP was proposed by the Committee as a Life Member, and this was ratified by a unanimous vote. NP expressed surprise and gratitude for the award. She has enjoyed being Chair even when there have been difficult times. It's been a pleasure working with this and previous supportive committees and to see the membership thriving.

12. Motions (see appendices)

Proposed by the Committee

- a. Ordinary Motion 1 – Outgoing Officers

Motion carried with 20 votes for, none against, and no abstentions.

Action: Committee to amend the Terms of Reference and Roles as per the Motion

- b. Ordinary Motion 2 – Chair's Role within the Joint Morris Organisations

Motion carried with 19 votes for, none against, and 1 abstention.

Action: Committee to amend the Terms of Reference and Roles as per the Motion

- c. Constitution Motion 1 – Define Junior Membership

Naomi Standen of The Acid Morris asked for clarification of 'majority'. JC discussed the choice of wording and it was agreed that 'majority' was a clear enough term.

Michael Stimpson said that he thought the upper age should be 17 to be more in line with legal categorisations, and suggested that the motion should be amended.

Eddie Carter said that definition is very difficult and has known sides who might qualify 'incidentally'.

MH said that the only advantage of Junior Membership is price, so we are saying that if the majority are under a certain age they pay less subs.

Mike Roberts asked the meeting to consider going the other way and making it 21 to include student sides, as the reduced rate would be very beneficial to them.

Naomi Standen agreed that she would support the higher age limit, as the mother of a young dancer.

MH said that some University sides are getting insurance through their Universities, and not the JMOs.

Pete de Courcy of The Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts suggested that 'in full time education' could be considered as a categorisation.

Charlotte Pascoe of Lepton Morris said that this discriminates against those not in education.

CM suggested 22 as an upper age limit to include those in last year of University.

Committee stated that there are no sides we know of who would fall into this student-age category.

Pamela Eastwood of Meon Valley Morris suggested that a concessionary category might help sides who struggle financially.

Mike Roberts suggested that it might be better to call the category 'Youth' instead of 'Junior' so as not to put off student age sides.

JC suggested asking our existing Junior Member Sides their opinion on the name of the Membership Category.

MH proposed the Motion with the age amended from 18 to 21.

Seconded by The Far Side.

Amended Motion carried with 19 votes for, none against, and 1 abstention.

Action: Committee to amend the Constitution as per the amended Motion

Action: Committee to contact Junior Member Sides and canvass opinion on the name of the Membership Category

Proposed by Holt Ridge and seconded by AnnieMation

- a. Ordinary Motion – Sue Dyke Award Travel Expenses

This motion has been withdrawn by HRM, who would like to engage in discussion with the Committee and possibly resubmit next year.

Appendix 8 – Motion Documents

13. Late Motions and Late Amendments (at Chairperson's discretion, subject to time limitations)

None submitted.

14. Joint Morris Organisations Day of Dance 2021

OM is due to host the JMO DoD in 2021, and we are looking for a host team. One expression of interest has proved unfeasible, and we've had another expression of interest but no concrete offers. Any JMO DoD venue needs around 15 dance spots to host around 50 sides, plus good public transport links, parking and toilets.

If you feel your side might be interested, please look at the new guidelines document on the website, and get in touch.

The JMO DoD 2020 will be in Liverpool, hosted by Mersey Morris Men on behalf of The Morris Ring. OM Members will be invited to apply to attend in due course.

15. The Sue Dyke Award presentation

A display of the two prizewinning entries was made at the meeting. Neither of the winners were able to be present, but delightfully both are youngsters, and are from relatively newly formed teams. Hannah Mitchell of Roses are Red won first prize of £100, a certificate, and a year's custodianship of the SDA tankard, and Daisy Kennedy of Ledbury Morris won £50 and a certificate.

The SDA Subcommittee, formed of NP and JC, would welcome any feedback or suggestions regarding the running of the competition, particularly from young members. If you know anyone who is eligible to enter please encourage them to enter next year's competition.

LS discussed the finances of the competition. The SDA fund came from a donation, and was given by Ken Dyke, Sue's Widower, for the Committee to administer. We made an ex gratia travel payment to last year's winner to attend the presentation at the AGM. The fund will cover another year's competition but we will have to make a decision in the following year about topping up the fund with OM money. The SDA needs to be evaluated after the next competition so we can decide the value of continuing.

NP would like to see the award continuing.

LS emphasised that ringfenced money is for SDA only and we cannot spend OM funds without agreement.

NP asked to gauge opinion about the withdrawn motion and the possibility of travel expenses running the money down faster. After a brief discussion it was made clear that there is no requirement for competition winners to attend the AGM.

Naomi Standen suggested that the prize could be presented at the JMO DoD as an alternative to young people travelling specially to the AGM. It was pointed out that this would only be practical in a year when OM hosts the JMO DoD, and there was some discussion about continuing the SDA on a tri-annual basis.

Action: Committee to discuss the future of the SDA and financial implications at AOM

Action: NP to consult with Ken Dyke

Action: SDA Subcommittee to produce an evaluation document after the 2020 competition

16. The Douglas Pickering Memorial Fund

NP introduced the fund and gave background.

NP: Doug was a very practical and pragmatic person and in trying to think what would best suit his memory, I've asked for the donation to help fund equipment for newly formed sides. Doug produced a lot of sticks from our woodland. Equipment seemed a good way of offering the money.

New sides can make applications for up to £50, which will be awarded at the discretion of the subcommittee, formed of NP, plus the Chair and Treasurer in office.

The fund will be ringfenced within OM accounts, and will also be open to further donations.

Eddie Carter of Billy No Mates asked how such a donation could be made. LS answered that we are able to accept cheques and bank transfers, and the Committee undertook to make details of the fund and the application and donation process available.

Jon Melville of the Morris Ring stated that within the Ring's renewal process they give sides the opportunity to donate to their archive and youth funds.

Action: Committee to produce and publicise formal documentation for the Fund

17. Any Other Business (items at Chairperson's discretion, subject to time limitations)

Life Member Chris Hall had emailed JC to ask for the format of the AGM to be discussed: is there any interest in a weekend AGM with a longer workshop and evening Ale on the Saturday, and the meeting on the second day?

The general feeling of the meeting was that there were pros and cons to each format, and it was agreed that it would be made clear to sides thinking of offering to host the AGM that a weekend format would be an option. Currently there is no requirement to organise the AGM in any particular format, although recent precedent has been for a morning workshop on a

Sunday followed by an afternoon meeting. There would be no requirement for Members to attend all parts of a weekend AGM, though it would be hoped that the longer format would encourage greater engagement. Jerry West of the Morris Federation said that the MF have always combined their AGM with a day of dance, this used to take place over a whole weekend but now usually takes place within a single day, with a late afternoon AGM after the dancing.

Action: Committee to discuss AGM format at AOM.

18. Date and venue of next AGM

Earl of Stamford have offered to host next year's AGM in the south Warrington area, roughly halfway between Liverpool and Manchester. They previously hosted a weekend AGM in 2008 but would probably not be able to offer a weekend this time.

Subsequent to the meeting, the date was confirmed as Sunday 29th November 2020.

19. Close of AGM

NP repeated thanks to Theale Tattoo for arranging the hall, workshop and food (especially the cake!), and thanked the Committee for their support over the last few years.

Meeting closed at 15.27pm.

