

Open Morris AGM 2020

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Chair's Report to the 2020 AGM

It seems a lifetime ago that I proudly attended my first event as Chair of Open Morris – the Stepping On conference at Cecil Sharp House in November 2019. That event was a coming together of many dancers from all over the world, a fascinating and convivial foray into the history and development of step dance, and the feeling of community and creativity engendered there made it a very fitting place to begin my term as Chair.

In company with Malcolm Hills and John Scholey, I attended the JMO AGM in Nuneaton in February, another event that seems now to belong to another life. It was not long after this that Covid-19 lockdown hit, and it was my very unexpected duty to inform OM that Morris activities were sadly off the cards for an indefinite period of time. I've said elsewhere that the way in which the Morris community has pulled together virtually, and thought outside the box to keep connections, friendships, traditions and skills alive during the pandemic has been utterly breath-taking, and I applaud everyone who has been part of this re-imagining or has made an effort to keep the Morris fires burning. The future is uncertain, with many areas returning to lockdown amid rising infection rates as I write, but the ingenuity and commitment to Morris that has been shown makes me very hopeful indeed for the future of the Morris world.

Navigating the pandemic from a Morris point of view has been no easy task, and there will doubtless be further hurdles in the future, but this period has meant that the JMO Committee have been working closely together towards common aims, and one of my hopes for my term as Chair, to foster those ties of friendship and common purpose with The Morris Federation and The Morris Ring, feels like it is well underway. The JMO has begun a dialogue with the government and is now hopefully well-placed to ensure that Morris is not forgotten when restrictions can eventually be lifted, as well as being able to provide our members with the information and resources that will be needed to return to activities when it is safe to do so. In addition, as I'm sure many people will be aware, the JMO has had more issues than just Covid-19 to deal with. The issue of full face black make-up has come to the fore and is likely to form a large part of the 2020 AGM. I've laid my thoughts on that subject out elsewhere in the AGM paperwork, but I would like to express that my chief concern has been to act responsibly and fairly whilst dealing with this difficult issue. I hope that all OM members will engage with the debates surrounding this in an informed and friendly manner.

I would like to thank the OM Committee and all of our Officials for their hard work and friendship this year. Whatever challenges the future brings, we are lucky to have a dedicated and skilled team, and I hope that with their support I can ensure that OM thrives during this uncertain period in history.

Jen Cox
Chair
Open Morris



Membership Secretary's Report to the 2020 Annual General Meeting

Note – Information in this report is to the end of the Open Morris Financial Year, i.e. 31st August 2020, to accord with the Treasurer's Report.

Statistics at Year End (31st August 2020) – Membership Categories

Category	Current year, to 31/08/2020	<i>Previous year, to 31/08/189</i>
Adult sides	129	130
Non -UK sides	1	1
Associate Member sides	1	0
Junior sides	5	5
Total sides	136	136
Individual Members	11	13
Total	147	149

How people paid this year

Form of Payment	Current year, to 31/08/2020	<i>Previous year, to 31/08/19</i>
Standing Order	34	30
Bank Transfer	86	85
Cheques	27	34
Cash	0	0
Total	147	149

The shift from cheques to bank transfers or standing orders continued, however such payment options may not be available to those members holding multi-signatory accounts.

I reported last year that we had our first recurring bank transfer – I am pleased to advise that the payment did indeed recur as planned this year!

I am pleased to report that we now have our first Associate Member: West Somerset Morris switched from being a full member side.

Arrivals

We have welcomed:

- Hafren Morris (joined 20-Jan-2020)
- Mumpers Hall Mummers (joined 18-Nov-19)
- Tatters Morris (joined 20-Jan-2020)
- The Village Morris (joined 7-Feb-2020)

Departures

Those who have departed are:

- Ten Lords Morris (classified as 'doubtful' last year), who had previously come back to life each autumn, but not this time
- Mayhem Border Morris
- Mayday Morris
- Madcap Morris, whose members are now with Far Side Morris, a newcomer last year
- Scotch Mule Morris (see Footnote "Changes after OM Financial Year End" below)
- Individual Member Doug Pickering and Honorary Member John Bacon and Life Member John Clifford who all sadly died since last year's report.
- Individual Member and former OM Chair Mrs Nicki Pickering, who was elevated to the OM peerage and is now a Life Member

Changes after OM Financial Year End (31st August 2020)

- New Individual Member Nickie Daily joined from 20 Sep 2020
- Scotch Mule Morris renewed on 4th November 2020

John Scholey MAHGTC



Open Morris Membership Secretary

membership@open-morris.org

Open Morris AGM 2020 Secretary's Report

This year has been an interesting year to be secretary, one fraught with challenges on both a global and personal scale.

Of course, we have had the crushing blow of the pandemic which has decimated our expected schedules of dance outs, practices and social gatherings. There are so many dancers, musicians and (most importantly) friends with whom meetings have been impossible and this contact has been missed by all. However, I also feel that we have shown just how strong our bond as a community really is! I've heard so many stories of creative teams finding new ways to meet and practice online and it really is buoying to know that, even in the darkest of times, the morris family is there to support each other.

On a personal level, I was pleasantly surprised when I secured a new job in January and started this role in April, in the midst of our first and strictest lockdown. It is this new position, which has been such a joy to me, which has meant that I have not been able to fulfil my role as secretary of Open Morris in the way that I had wanted. Whilst I have been present at and involved in our committee meetings there have been many moments when I have been unable to find the time to respond to your emails and for this I apologise. As a result, I have decided to step down from this role and hand the baton (hanky) over to someone who has the time to dedicate to such an important position. I hope that my successor has more...success...and is able to respond to your needs as a membership. Best of luck to you!

Lucy Simmonds

Open Morris Treasurer's Report 2019-20

This is my third year as Treasurer, and the revised format of the accounts seems to be working well.

I have included the full accounts to show detailed income and expenditure, see Appendix 1

Expenditure

The total expenditure in 2019-20, £2159.17, is £353.28 less than the previous year. Members might recall that expenditure last year was almost half that in 2017-18, the significantly lower expenditure being mainly due to "Dancing On" is being published virtually; this may or may not carry forward.

The slightly lower expenditure in 2019-20 is in part due to the use of Zoom for JMO, Committee and Officials' meetings, incurring no travel costs. It is worth noting that the cost of maintenance for the website was £50.00 but the payment together with some other expenses, just missed year end and will be shown in next year's accounts.

Income

As may be seen from Appendix 2 we are able to balance the income expected from the membership with the actual income shown in the accounts.

As reported in the Membership Secretary's report overall we have lost 1 side and 2 individual members, a total loss of £49. We now have 1 associate side at £25 so the total subscription income is £24 less than last year at £4717.

The total income for the year was £6232 because of a number of donations. In addition to £15 donations during the renewal process, there have been two exceptionally generous donations to the Sue Dyke Memorial Fund. Shinfield Shambles donated £500 and Potty Morris and Folk Festival gave £1000. These donations will ensure the continuation of the Sue Dyke Award for several years and are a great boost to Open Morris' initiative to engage young people in Morris.

Financial Out-turn

The amount shown in the accounts at year end, £19,299.54, including the balances of the Sue Dyke Award Fund after donations and the Doug Pickering Memorial Fund (DPMF), matches the amount in the bank on 31st August 2020 and the Independent Reviewer has signed off the accounts, See Appendices 3 and 4 of this report. Because of late payment of an invoice and expenses claim there is a £115.10 commitment in financial year 2020-2021 accounts.

Level of Financial Reserves

Excluding the balance of the Sue Duke Award fund and the Doug Pickering Fund, the Open Morris bank balance stands at £17,326.90 less the £115.10 commitment, a total of £17211.80.

At the AGM in 2019 it was accepted that OM should retain 2 x annual income as a reserve and allocate a fund for possible initiatives.

As a result of the pandemic there has been no consideration of any potential initiatives and so there has been no related expenditure.

Subscription Rates for 2020-21

The OM Committee recognises that teams have not been able to practice properly since March and there was no dancing season in 2020. As a result, although teams paid their subs to ensure appropriate insurance, there was no dancing season to insure.

It is recommended therefore that all subscriptions for those sides and individual members renewing in January 2021 should be waived. The intention to make the recommendation has already been notified on the website to keep in step with announcements from other JMO organisations.

Waiving subs will result in a loss of approximately £4700 in income, which, given a similar level of expenditure in 2020-21, would result in an outturn next year of approx.£12,500, excluding Sue Dyke Award and DPMF accounts.

This still allows a reserve of 2 x annual income (approx. £9,400) but a reduced opportunity for funding initiatives.

Appendix 2

**OPEN MORRIS
YEAR ENDING AUGUST 31 2020
RECEIPTS**

Date	DETAILS	SUBS	DONATION	OTHER	TOTAL
18.11.19	Subs Mumpers Hall Mumpers	£35.00			
2.12.19	Subs Lucking	£7.00			
2.12.19	FOW145 subs	£35.00			
2.12.19	ALF100 subs	£35.00			
3.12.19	Roses are Red subs (jnr)	£15.00			
3.12.19	Wicket Brood Morris subs	£35.00			
3.12.19	FLG300 subs	£35.00			
4.12.19	CRA309 subs	£35.00			
4.12.19	White Horse Morris subs	£35.00			
5.12.19	Fenstanton Morris subs	£35.00			
6.12.19	Boggarts Breakfast subs	£35.00			
6.12.19	AHM323 subs	£35.00			
9.12.19	JER163 subs	£35.00			
10.12.19	HEP158 subs	£35.00			
10.12.19	BOR115 subs	£35.00			
10.12.19	THT291	£35.00			
11.12.19	Motley Morris subs	£35.00			
11.12.19	Eken subs	£25.00			
11.12.19	Mucky Mountain Morris subs	£35.00			
12.12.19	Sue Deacon subs	£7.00			
12.12.19	PLA191 subs	£35.00			
12.12.19	YON285 subs	£35.00			
16.12.19	Pig Dyke Molly subs	£35.00			
16.12.19	Buttercross subs	£35.00			
16.12.19	RAH195 subs	£35.00			
17.12.19	A Chadwick subs	£7.00			
17.12.19	HRF316 subs	£35.00			
17.12.19	Holt Ridge Morris subs	£35.00			
18.12.19	LAD168 subs	£35.00			
18.12.19	Whitethorn Morris subs	£35.00			
19.12.19	S Watson subs	£7.00			
20.12.19	ROL204 subs	£35.00			
27.12.19	Cheques 20.01 subs	£350.00	£10.00		
30.12.19	ATM306 subs	£35.00			
30.12.19	BBB315 subs	£35.00			
30.12.19	R James subs	£7.00			
30.12.19	B J Roland subs	£7.00			
30.12.19	ELT138 subs	£35.00			
30.12.19	LEP170 subs	£35.00			
30.12.19	BIR290 subs	£35.00			
30.12.19	TOL229 subs	£35.00			
31.12.19	CCO321 subs	£35.00			
31.12.19	COL129 subs	£35.00			
31.12.19	MBD181 subs	£35.00			
2.1.20	Black Pig Subs	£35.00			
2.1.20	Plymouth Maids subs	£35.00			
6.2.20	Restless Soles subs	£35.00			
6.1.20	FIS142 subs	£35.00			
6.1.20	THL228 Subs	£35.00			
7.1.20	MEO303 subs	£35.00			
8.1.20	BED106 subs	£35.00			
8.1.20	TBM327 subs	£35.00			
8.1.20	OXF187 subs	£35.00			
9.1.20	ACM298 subs	£35.00			
9.1.20	WOL301 subs	£35.00			
9.1.20	GOG149 subs	£35.00			
10.1.20	West Somerset Morris associate Sub	£25.00	£5.00		
10.1.20	10 x subs	£350.00			
13.1.20	Sarah Rose Subs	£7.00			
13.1.20	4 x subs	£140.00			
14.1.20	4 x subs	£140.00			
15.1.20	14 x subs	£490.00			
15.1.20	2 x jnr subs	£30.00			
16.1.20	3 x subs	£105.00			
20.1.20	BUN121 subs	£35.00			
21.1.20	Old School Rapper subs	£35.00			
22.1.20	L Pearce subs	£7.00			
22.1.20	SWA222 subs	£15.00			
22.1.20	ITF283 subs	£35.00			
24.1.20	Barclays subs	£14.00			
24.1.20	SEV209 subs	£35.00			
27.1.20	3 x subs	£105.00			
28.1.20	6 x subs	£210.00			
29.1.20	2 x subs	£70.00			
30.1.20	2 x subs	£70.00			
31.1.20	3 x subs	£105.00			
6.2.20	Village Morris subs	£35.00			
11.2.20	Cheques 20.02 subs	£547.00			
6.5.20	Shinfield Shambles SDA donation		£500.00		
15.5.20	Chorlton Clodhoppers subs	£35.00			
20.5.20	Potty Morris & Folk Festival donation SDA		£1,000.00		
TOTAL 2018-2019		£4,717.00	£1,515.00	£0.00	£6,232.00

Appendix 4

Sue Dyke Memorial Prize Account 2019 - 20

Date	Expenditure Item	Chq No	Amount	Funds Available
1-Sep-19			Balance brought forward	£434.14
3.11.19	First prize H Mitchell	377	£100.00	£334.14
3.11.19	Second prize J M Kennedy	376	£50.00	£284.14
10.11.19	N Pickering, engraving tankard	T	£11.50	£272.64
5.5.20	Shinfield shambles donation £500			£772.64
20.5.20	Potty's donation £1000			£1,772.64
TOTAL			£161.50	

Independent Reviewer's Report

Barwick Green

28 The Glade
Fetcham
Surrey KT22 9TH

Tel 01372 454024
e-mail morris@Barwick-Green.co.uk

29th September 2020

INDEPENDENT REVIEWER'S REPORT

As the Open Morris appointed Independent Reviewer, I attach my report on the accounts, as prepared for the 12 month period ended 31 August 2020.

The accounts reviewed consist of a Financial Statement and accompanying detailed records consisting of bank statements, spreadsheets and paper copies of expenses and claims.

As an Association and with a low income, Open Morris is not required to submit accounts for a full audit by an accountant. The Open Morris Constitution now uses the term "Independent Reviewer" to describe the role of the person who reviews the accounts for irregularities, on behalf of the membership.

INDEPENDENT REVIEWER'S STATEMENT 2020

This statement is based on my examination and review of the accounting records kept by Open Morris and a comparison with the Statement presented with those records.

My review also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations. The procedures undertaken do not cover all the original documentation that would be required in an 'Audit' and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" of the activities of Open Morris and the report is limited to the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

Following my examination:

- a) No matter has come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that the accounting records have not been kept in accordance with the requirements of Open Morris and UK accounting principles.
- b) No matters have come to my attention which would require further examination to enable a proper full understanding of Open Morris's Statement and Accounts.



Independent Reviewer's Signed Copy of Accounts

OPEN MORRIS **YEAR ENDING AUGUST 31st 2020** **TREASURERS REPORT**

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>2018-2019</u>	<u>2019-2020</u>
SUBSCRIPTIONS	£4,761.00	£4,717.00
DONATION	£270.00	£1,515.00
OTHER	£0.00	£0.00
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>£5,031.00</u>	<u>£6,232.00</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
OFFICERS EXPENSES	£30.00	£7.50
DANCING ON	£0.00	£14.99
INSURANCE	£1,124.61	£1,155.00
AGM EXPENSES	£325.50	£476.34
AOM EXPENSES	£146.65	£0.00
JMO AGM	£218.03	£0.00
JMO Day of Dance/other	£194.05	£175.70
PRS	£36.82	£38.00
SUBS REFUNDS	£55.00	£0.00
MISCELLANEOUS Inc DPMF	£101.60	£112.20
SUE DYKE AWARD	£211.00	£179.44
WEBSITE	£69.19	£0.00
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>£2,512.45</u>	<u>£2,159.17</u>
<u>Surplus / Deficit for the year</u>	<u>£2,518.55</u>	<u>£4,072.83</u>
<u>BALANCE B/Fwd</u>	<u>£12,708.16</u>	<u>£15,226.71</u>
<u>BALANCE C/Fwd</u>	<u>£15,226.71</u>	<u>£19,299.54</u>
<u>Sue Dyke Donation</u>	<u>-£434.15</u>	<u>-£1,772.64</u>
<u>Doug Pickering fund</u>		<u>-£200.00</u>
<u>Open Morris Funds</u>	<u>£14,792.56</u>	<u>£17,326.90</u>



Independent Reviewer

Open Morris Web Officer Report

Web Site

1. Domain Names:
 - a. The domain name open-morris.org is registered to Open Morris with 123-reg.co.uk. The domain is currently registered until 3 Jan 2021
 - b. The domain name jmodayofdance.com is registered to Joint Morris Organisations with 123-reg.co.uk. The domain is currently registered until 20 Nov 2021. The domain is paid for on behalf of the three morris organisations.

2. Hosting: The website and email facilities are currently hosted by Hills Associates, the trading name of Malcolm Hills. The annual cost for hosting is £50 per year. This is invoiced annually on 1 January. There are no limitations to storage capacity, bandwidth or email facilities.

3. Web Site
 - a. The website is built on the Wordpress CMS platform using a premium professional theme (Enfold). Open Morris has purchased a lifetime single site licence for Enfold
 - b. The Web Site is designed to provide as much information as possible for members and the public. All of Open Morris Documents are available for viewing online and can be downloaded for offline viewing.
 - c. This year we have used the extensive database facilities to allow online registration to attend the AGM and provide robust AGM Voting facilities.

4. Usage: The website attracts approximately 75,000 page hits per month. Full detailed statistics are available on request.

5. Ongoing Problems
 - a. Email. Providing an email service that can be used by a small number of people i.e. the committee members and also providing mass mailing functions to our membership will always be difficult. Sending mail to a large number of recipients and forwarding to personal email addresses is always likely to attract attention and occasional blacklisting. This is an ongoing problem that is monitored closely. For this reason we ask all members to provide an alternative email contact address in case the primary address can't be reached.
 - b. The site is large and complex and sometimes things don't quite work, particularly with the numerous varied devices and browsers now available. Often the only way to know that something is broken is to be told

by the users. Please do not hesitate to let me know if anything is not behaving the way you think it should.

6. Side Details and Photos: Each member side has its own Side Page. A brief resumé and photographs can easily be added to this page. The page also includes details of your practice times and venue (where provided). It is important therefore to keep us up to date with any changes. If you would like a resumé and photographs added then please send them to me at web@open-morris.org

7. Finally, whilst I might be technically competent to maintain our web presence, I am not particularly creative; I am therefore more than happy to receive criticism and suggestions to make it easier to use.

Malcolm Hills

Web Officer

web@open-morris.org

28 October 2020

Officials' Reports

Editor of Dancing On! – Report 2020

Hello! Well it's been an exciting year in terms of me taking over as editor and producing my first issue – not sure it's been all that exciting otherwise though.

The 2020 issue of Dancing On! saw the magazine return in digital format with a new but familiar look. Due to the magazine having not been published for some time beforehand, there was a lot of content in the backlog that either needed to be published or disregarded. Unfortunately, this did mean that some content I deemed too old to publish, and I apologise to the senders of those submissions. What it meant for the rest of the content was an effort to make relevant some articles which now seemed somewhat stuck in the past. I hoped to achieve this by linking those articles with current news items in the structure, or by reframing the perspective of some submissions by working with the writers.

My image for what Dancing On! should be is a celebration of our community within Open Morris and the larger morris “world”. It was a joy to be able to showcase sides such as Steps in Time and Eken Morris Dancers, because we as members are not always aware of the range of sides within Open Morris and what each one is doing.

I was happy to publish a range of content such as articles (personal and academic), a poem, a guide to setting up a new team and more. I'd like to continue with this range and variety that showcases the talent and activities of the morris community, whether it be visual or literal, art or essay. So far, I have really enjoyed being in contact with so many of the contributors to the magazine and hope to continue to build relations with all sides who are willing to share something with me or the magazine.

This is *your* magazine! I take any feedback gladly and will work my hardest to make sure that this is a product that all member sides can be proud of. Please submit whatever you wish – our content doesn't grow on trees, and I would really like you all to think of Dancing On! whenever you do something awesome or noteworthy. I hope to continue updating the look of the magazine and prioritising accessibility, and perhaps even a warm fuzzy feeling that helps you feel closer to the community that we haven't been able to dance/play alongside for so long.

My current hope is that I will have an issue ready for publication in spring 2021, but this does rely on submissions – so if you have something in mind, go for it and send it over! Depending on what the situation is with dancing, printing and how easily we can distribute the magazine in spring, the issue may be digital again, but I would prefer to publish physically if possible.

I remain available to contact whenever you have any ideas, submissions or feedback – or even if you just want to say hi! Thanks all.

Conor Smith – dancingon@open-morris.org

Area Rep Reports

Wales & Northwest

Unsurprisingly there isn't much to report this year but here are a few snippets...

The lockdown restrictions in Wales have meant that Cadi Ha could have a few evening practices in early autumn and a few sunny Sunday afternoon ones later. As many other sides do, we meet occasionally on Zoom although we haven't ventured into the realm of actual virtual dancing yet. As a small side, Cadi Ha already have their dances choreographed for 4 dancers. Adding in a 2 metre rule has been fun to choreograph and may be the forerunner of future morris.

Earl of Stamford have met more regularly on Zoom to socialise and even learn a jig, with some early autumn outdoor practices. Rather than cancel their annual Souling Play, a few Zoom rehearsals led to the creation of 2 versions online to raise money for a local hospice. The link is available for anyone who wants to contact me.

Wolfgate have been dormant all year, with some of their members even escaping to spend their lockdown in New Zealand.

It's good to see Briganti Border Morris have been keeping active, albeit in a limited way. As well as meeting weekly by Zoom, their Foreman has sent me links to several videos of solo dances they have compiled, including their entry for the Stick & Bucket competition. They have also produced some video instructionals and workshops. The Foreman's dog looks like a good recruit too!

Mucky Mountains have only managed one outdoor practice but created a virtual 6 person dance for a Virtual Town Show – cleverly using 3 socially distanced double jigs to create the illusion of a 6 person set. I am constantly amazed by the innovative ideas out there!

Here's hoping for more to report next year.

Nicki Pickering

Wales & NW Area Rep

Central

During the pandemic, OM teams in the Central Area have been on the more active side, with the majority of teams in our area meeting in limited numbers for socially

distanced practices, dancing together virtually online, and taking opportunities to participate in virtual events. Theale Tattoo, who hosted last year's AGM, have been lucky to find that zoom works very well for step clog team practices, and have also been able to return to covid-safe physical practices whilst regulations have allowed.

I'm confident that OM teams in our area will stand a good chance of striding through this period unharmed, and that the strong local Morris community will once more become the busy and thriving community we know and love.

Jen Cox

Central South

Open Morris Rep Report for Central South 2020

What an extraordinary year. As I have obviously been unable to get out and about to see any dancing since March I had to resort to e-mailing or phoning Open Morris sides in the Central South Region. This is a summary of what I heard or read.

Sides were generally active over the winter practising and performing on their traditional Festival Days. Once the lock down arrived it became a tale of cancelled events and nothing happening. A few sides attempted practising outdoors in members' garden over the summer but that has proved difficult. Baker's Dozen tried to practice dancing together on Zoom but found it ended up more as a social get together. My own side, Devil's Jumps actually got back to regular practices when our practice hall opened up at the mid October. We managed two practices before having to close down again. At least I have done all the risk assessments so we are ready to re-start back as soon as we are allowed. Following garden practice, Whitgar Morris have developed some of their dances to include social distancing i.e. back and then further back instead of back to back and all sticking done by non-dancers with two sticks to create the sound.

There has also been a certain amount of activity on social media. Meon Valley Morris posted performances for May Day and the Summer Solstice, and contributed to the Loan Morris Festival. Some teams on the Isle of Wight took part in the Isolation Row Folk Festival.

On a more positive note sides are looking forward to next year, hoping to get back to practising soon and have received invitations to perform at various festivals next year, Covid-19 willing.

Clare Mach

Northeast

Apart from a few winter events. Boxing Day Danceouts and some Wassailing, the Northeast has been rather quiet. We are all looking forward to being able to resume practices and of course get out dancing again.

Malcolm Hills

Area Rep for the Northeast

East Anglia

What a depressing year, the video conferencing platforms have provided an opportunity of continuity of group social connections.

Fenstanton danced at dawn on May 1st individually and continued socially on Messenger or Zoom completing the crossword or quizzes on a regular basis.

Many discussions between the officers and officials of OM about the JMO and the 'Black Face' issue also the use of technology to carry out the requirements of running the AGM.

Robin James

South East

With the Covid-19 pandemic and consequent restrictions on gatherings having effectively wiped out morris dancing programmes throughout the country in 2020, there is very little to report this year.

Two molly sides who are active only in December/January were unaffected by the virus last winter and completed their short programme of dance-outs centred on Plough Monday as usual. But both have had to cancel the whole of this winter's programmes.

Border and North-West sides have, in the main, been unable to practice and dance out in the normal way. One side practised a few socially distanced re-choreographed dances wearing masks and managed to do one dance out on Bonfire Night. Others have run regular Zoom or Hangout sessions, mostly for social purposes, such as quizzes, games and chat, though one side did use them for individual dance practice. Several participated in the online Lone Morris festivals. Facebook and WhatsApp have also been used as a means of maintaining contact within a side.

A rapper side is particularly affected due to the close-contact nature of that dance style which doesn't lend itself to socially distanced variations of dances. They are concerned that 2021 may not enable rapper to resume and are thinking of taking up step dancing next year as an alternative.

A junior side are experiencing difficulties owing to their inability to meet together, and the children's lack of enthusiasm for practising individually in Zoom sessions.

Apart from a brief open-air practice in a park and dance display to local residents, the main activity has been games on Zoom or sometimes in the park. Several dancers have dropped out and more may do so as time goes by. The adult organisers have been invited to restart school dance clubs when restrictions are eased, so that may afford opportunities for recruitment.

All sides are hoping that next year will allow them to get back to some semblance of normal activity.

Chris Lamb

South-East Area Rep

20 November 2020

Ordinary Motion 1

Members will be aware that on 3rd July 2020 the Joint Morris Organisations (JMO) on behalf of The Morris Federation, The Morris Ring and Open Morris issued a statement as follows:

Joint Morris Organisations Statement

Our traditions do not operate in a vacuum. While no morris dancer wants to cause offence, we must recognise that full face black or other skin tone makeup is a practice that has the potential to cause deep hurt.

Morris is a living tradition and it is right that it has always adapted and evolved to reflect society. Over the past few years, many morris teams have already proactively taken the decision to stop using full face black makeup to avoid causing offence or hurt. We now believe we must take further steps to ensure the continued relevance and inclusivity of the tradition.

The Joint Morris Organisations (The Morris Federation, The Morris Ring, and Open Morris) have therefore agreed that each of them will take action to eliminate this practice from their membership. Teams that continue to use full face black or other skin tone make up will find they are no longer part of the mainstream morris community, be covered by JMO public liability insurance, or invited to take part in events organised or sponsored by the JMO.

Morris is a unique cultural tradition of which we should be rightly proud. We want people from all races and backgrounds to share in this pride and not be made to feel unwelcome or uncomfortable by any element of a performance.

Each of the organisations had to consider how to take the action described in the statement. Their constitutions are different, the timings of their AGMs are different but there was a unanimous determination amongst officers of the JMO to implement any changes as soon as practicable within each organisation.

The OM committee immediately implemented a review of the OM Equality Policy, which was due by August 2020 under the OM Constitution. It was found that the policy met the intent of the JMO statement, with minor clarifying amendments, and the revised version is on the OM website. The Committee is entitled to make this revision under section 5c of the Constitution which states:

“Subject to this Constitution and decisions taken at AGMs and EGMs, the Committee has full executive power and authority to take any action necessary to conduct OM affairs between AGMs and EGMs on condition that any such action is agreed by the majority of Officers in writing including by email”

Section 22 of the Constitution makes clear OM's commitment to equality and diversity as expressed in the Equality Policy.

Section 3b of the Constitution, states that Membership requires acceptance of the Constitution of OM, and failure to do so will result in membership being rescinded and cancellation of Public Liability Insurance.

The Committee is unanimously of the view that teams who use full face black make up will be in breach of the Equality Policy and therefore of the OM Constitution and will not be accepted as members at the 2021 renewal and thereafter.

Motion

The AGM resolves to support the view of the OM Committee that teams who use full face black make up will be in breach of the Equality Policy of the OM Constitution and will not be accepted as members at the 2021 renewal and thereafter.

As a result of this resolution the OM Committee will review the application and renewal processes to ensure that teams are aware of this requirement.

Ordinary Motion 2

Proposed by The Acid Morris and seconded by Beorma Morris

Whereas we agree that the death of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement means that the Morris community, being practitioners of a living tradition, must adapt and evolve to reflect progressive changes in wider society;

Whereas we note that in the OM Equality Policy, OM 'commits to creating an environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination', we believe that this means that people from all races, backgrounds and identities must actively be made to feel welcome to observe or participate in Morris dancing in order to 'ensure that Morris Dancing and allied activities may be enjoyed by anyone who wishes to participate or spectate';

Whereas we note the principle in the OM Equality Policy to 'encourage equality and diversity in our members', and are conscious that greater representation of underrepresented groups is a key factor in encouraging and increasing interest and participation in any activity;

Whereas we must regretfully note our awareness of racist comments and attitudes in the Morris community, and believe that it behoves this AGM to remind OM that members are 'responsible for ensuring they adhere to the principles' of the Equality Policy and 'are responsible for assisting OM in preventing' 'bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination';

We propose the following Ordinary Motion:

Motion:

The AGM resolves that sides who do not take proactive steps to diversify the membership and the venues in which their side performs will be in breach of the Equality Policy of the OM Constitution and will not be accepted as members at the 2021 renewal and thereafter.

Response to Ordinary Motion 2

The OM Committee advise against adopting this motion.

Whilst we would encourage active diversification and proactive outreach from teams, we recognise that placing such a burden on teams, many of whom struggle to recruit, or operate in areas where a diverse population is unavailable to them as target audience, is unrealistic, and the enforcement of this motion could lead to teams folding or leaving OM. We also recognise that many teams within OM are doing well and making strides in this area and we feel that the motion undermines progress which has been made up to this point. We fully recognise such active diversification as necessary to the future of Morris, and as good practice, but we believe that the Morris world as a whole, which is already under considerable threat from the pandemic, is not currently well equipped to deal with the requirements of such a motion.

There is no structure or insight given in the motion as to how such a requirement might be implemented. Open Morris has neither the resources nor the mandate to police the recruitment or performance locations of all member teams, and the OM Committee feel that this makes the motion unviable.

The motion is also at odds with Constitution 2) f) which states ‘...OM will not accept or support any proposal that will interfere with the internal policies or practices of any Member Side.’ In placing a requirement for action upon teams within the organisation, this motion would contravene that part of the Constitution.

Supporting Document for Ordinary Motion 2

A Few Suggestions for Ethnic Diversity In Morris

Please note, these are only suggestions and they relate to ethnic diversity, although some may also be applicable to diversity in other areas. This is not because diversity elsewhere is unimportant but because this is my area of expertise and it was what I was asked for.

- There are around 1500 mosques in Britain, 454 synagogues, 300 mandirs (Hindu temples), and about the same number of gurdwaras (Sikh temples) as well as a bewildering array of other religious and cultural organisations, spread all over the country. You could make contact with some of these, local to you, introduce yourselves and offer your services.
- There is a list of religious festivals here <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/religious-festivals> and here <https://www.reonline.org.uk/festival-calendar/>.
- You could always link seasonal dance outs to more than one festival, e.g. Bonfire Night/Samhain/Halloween with Diwali. Bear in mind that because the Islamic calendar is lunar rather than solar the date of the two Eids (Adha and Fitr) change year by year. In the lifetime of an individual they will process through the whole year.

- Many religious festivals are celebrated by specific celebrations, e.g. Eid melas, for which organisers are often looking for “entertainment”. These can be a good opportunity for you to offer your services, spread the word of Morris, and maybe even recruit.
- As well as specifically religious groups across the country there are thousands of national and cultural groups and institutions, some large, some tiny. Some cultural groups, e.g. Chinese/Taiwanese/Hong Kongers who do not identify through religious institutions, can be contacted through these national, regional or cultural organisations who often have events to celebrate, e.g. independence days, national holidays or other festivals. Make contact! Offer to dance!
- A little goes a long way and this is true of language. Just a few words on advertising, recruitment posters or flyers in another script: “Join us”, “Welcome”, etc, can have a big effect. The inclusion of just a few words in another script may also have the effect of putting off any infiltration by right wing political groups about which people were worried. All translations and scripts are readily available via Google, and there are undoubtedly resources on the various Morris Facebook groups that can be tapped for specific advice.
- Similarly when the announcer, fool or whiffler introduces you to the audience why not throw a “Shalom”, “As salaam alaikum” or “Ni hao” in there; and maybe work up another few phrases. It is all available via Google. Most things are.
- By the same token, the front person can also ensure that they routinely tell the audience that the side always welcomes new musicians of any shape, size, colour, creed, etc (you may want to add more to the list), and that the only criterion for dancers is a love of dancing. You can be even more welcoming by adding how to get in contact, and when and where the regular practice is. Side members engaging in conversation with audience members can also mention these things in response to any glimmer of possible interest.
- If you already have some multicultural links of any kind, it would be worth mentioning those too while you’re either announcing or chatting to the audience, e.g. you’ve taught Morris at this or that local school (and maybe there were some really good dancers), or you’ve performed at a local Mela, etc.
- If you’re dancing for a particular festival, e.g. May Day, solstice, wassail, etc, you can also point out parallels from other traditions; everyone whose climate has seasons marks the changes in some way (and those who don’t have festivals anyway). It just shows that you’re interested in making cross-cultural connections, and again it can all be googled, or you can ask on Facebook.
- If you write your own dances, or if you want to start, you could consider incorporating a move from another dance tradition, and then tell the audience that you’ve done so. You could also point out to the audience that Morris is not only a distinctive tradition but also an evolving one, and that historically it borrowed from other countries and cultures.
- Amongst Moslems, and to a lesser extent Sikhs and Hindus, if there is a perception of Morris dancing then it is associated with heavy drinking. I have spoken to Moslem friends who have expressed great interest in joining a side but dismiss it because of the emphasis on alcohol. You may want to think about this and while there is no easy solution, exhortations like “Do You Love Beer? You Will Love Morris” are at best offputting. If your side only dance in and outside pubs you will only ever recruit the sort of people who one finds in and outside pubs.

- There are plenty of online sites which detail the needs and practices of different religious and cultural groups, e.g. some of the NHS pages, and there is more advice here <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/building-good-relations-with-people-of-different-faiths-and-beliefs>. It is also important to remember that members of particular religious and cultural groups are not all “of a piece”, there are wide differences within every general grouping, e.g. some Moslems do eschew dancing, as indeed do some Christians, but many, e.g. Sufis, use it as part of worship.
- The hardest part of this process is tackling racism among the members of one’s own side, and challenging overtly racist behaviour and statements. No one is perfect and people do “misspeak”, but sides may want to think long and hard about allowing membership to those who deliberately continue to make racist comments. The above are just a few suggestions. I am sure that others have equally good if not better ideas. Remember too that for some sides, i.e. those few who only recruit from the residents of one village, advice on recruitment is moot. Ultimately, a little goes a long way and with just a bit of thought we can be more welcoming and open to a much wider ethnic mix. Morris is English culture: that is, it is the culture of a multiracial, multiethnic country, and if we do not seek the support of ALL groups in England then Morris will wither and die. If you have any questions or need help then there are sides with some expertise in this area who are ready and willing to help. Beorma Morris for one. Good luck and ... KEEP DANCING.

Naomi Standen (Acid Morris) Tony Roberts Beorma Morris Birmingham

CONSTITUTION MOTION 1: Aims and Principles

Amend the Constitution to read:

2) AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

- a) OM is an association to which all morris sides and interested persons are equally welcome to apply for membership.

Current text

2) AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

- a) OM is an association in which all morris sides and interested persons are equally welcome.

Explanatory note:

This amendment elaborates upon the inclusivity of OM and gives clarity to our current membership practices.

CONSTITUTION MOTION 2: Membership

Amend the Constitution to read:

3) MEMBERSHIP

- b) Membership requires acceptance of and compliance with the Constitution of OM, and failure to do so may result in membership being rescinded and cancellation of Public Liability Insurance.

Current text

3) MEMBERSHIP

- b) Membership requires acceptance of the Constitution of OM, and failure to do so will result in membership being rescinded and cancellation of Public Liability Insurance.

Explanatory note:

This amendment clarifies that membership is contingent upon adherence to the Constitution. OM has a Complaints Policy and Procedures document that details clearly the structures we have in place for resolving any issues from outside or within the organisation.

CONSTITUTION MOTION 3: Clarify intent of Section 22: Equality

Amend the Constitution to read:

22) EQUALITY

- c) The OM Equality Policy forms part of the OM Constitution and makes clear how OM will support equality. It is published on the OM website. It is the responsibility of the OM Committee to review the Equality Policy and its impact on other OM documents every 3 years, or sooner if necessary, to take account of changes in the law.
- d) **All of OM** are to comply with the OM Equality Policy.

Current text:

22) EQUALITY

- c) The OM Equality Policy is published on the OM website and makes clear how OM will support equality in all the work of the organisation.
 - d) **All of OM** are advised to follow the principles of any current equality legislation as set out in the OM Equality Policy.
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Explanatory note

This amendment clarifies the responsibilities of the Committee and OM Members with regard to the maintenance and implementation of the Equality Policy, and clarifies that the Equality Policy forms part of the OM Constitution.

A Letter from the Chair – Oct 2020

Dear OM Members,

When I stepped into Nicki's lovely and admirable shoes as Chair of OM in November 2019, I couldn't have imagined the changes to the world we're living in within so short a time. During the Covid-19 pandemic, I've been utterly floored by the ingenuity, commitment and community spirit people have shown in keeping our dances, music and friendships alive. This period has proved to me the resilience and immeasurable value of what some consider to be just a hobby, and many consider to be nothing less than a way of life.

The world changed further with the killing of George Floyd in America in May 2020, and the global momentum gained by the anti-racism movement Black Lives Matter.

Before May 2020 I'd have told you that although I personally didn't feel comfortable 'blackening up', I'd defend your right, and the right of teams, to do so. My viewpoint has changed, and while I don't think that we should be denying the past, the time has come to move to a future where we act with more awareness and sensitivity to how our actions can be perceived by wider society. My fundamental belief is that whilst teams do not have racist intent when using full face black make up today, there is irrefutable documentary evidence that minstrel and variety performer groups in the past have intended racial mimicry, and that this irrevocably links the practice with racial offence. This, for me, combined with the very real possibility of black people in the UK today facing the use of full face black make up in their town centres, with the justification that traditions are more important than their right to live free from perceived parody and harassment, is more than enough to lead me to consider the practice out of place in modern society.

Recently, social media platforms Facebook and Instagram have banned 'caricatures of black people in the form of blackface', which means that images of teams using full face black make up may be subject to removal. This demonstrates to me that this move within the Morris world is timely, and in tune with wider feeling. Another point which has been a factor in our discussions has been the potential use of Morris by some groups using social media, as a manifestation of English nationalism to the exclusion of those who are not white.

Many teams have re-evaluated their use of face-paint over the last four years following controversy in the media in 2016 associated with teams using full face black make up at a particular folk festival. Through this process it has become clear to me that the tradition people are seeking to protect should be

considered more widely. The tradition is 'guising' – it is the act of disguising your appearance when performing, so that you may be anonymous. This tradition, in the wake of 2016, has shown tremendous creative blossoming, and I'm excited to see where it will lead us in the future. I love painting my face and dancing my socks off, but I believe this can be done effectively, and above all, authentically, without the use of full face black make up.

We must also be aware of UK Equality legislation. The Equality Act (2010) is a piece of legislation in the UK which makes harassment based on any protected characteristic as defined in the act unlawful. The Act is clear that it is the perception of the injured party that is important in a case of harassment. There is therefore a possibility of a claim against a Morris team using full face black make up, exacerbated by the global political climate, and it is our responsibility as the OM Committee to take steps to guard against that risk.

The JMO has faced criticism for 'dictating' to our members, but please consider that our initial JMO statement was quite simply an announcement of our intent to address this issue.

Each organisation agreed to bring this issue to the attention of our members at the earliest opportunity, which for OM is the upcoming AGM, and that is exactly what is taking place. Although the structures we have in place within OM allow the Committee to keep the Equality Policy of the organisation concurrent with UK law, we have been keen to offer the opportunity for debate and vote on a motion at the AGM.

I want to assure you that none of us, as Officers of OM or the JMO, have acted with anything but the best interests of the Morris world at heart, or without months of forethought. None of the decisions we have made as elected officers have been taken lightly, the more so because we have dear friends on every side of the debate who we know will be effected by the outcome and by the process itself. We have acted from a desire to build and strengthen the Morris world and to ensure that the traditions we love have the best chance of striding into the future with the respect and support of the communities in which they stand.

Jen
Chair
Open Morris

Sue Dyke Award

2020 Report and Evaluation

Sue Dyke was a longstanding member of various OM member teams and a past OM Officer. Sadly, Sue died in early 2017 and her husband Ken contacted Nicki, as the then OM Chair, with the amazing offer to make OM the beneficiary of the funeral donations.

During conversations with Ken it quickly became clear that Sue had been particularly concerned about bringing young people into Morris and keeping them. The Committee then spent several months discussing ideas that would promote this ideal and, with Ken's approval, plans for a youth competition and award in Sue's name were formulated.

It was almost a year later that 5 judges were recruited from the Folk, Morris and general dance world. The judges were picked for their expertise in dance, music and the creative arts in various forms. For the past 2 years, we have had 6 judges, but we may drop back to 5 again next year as it makes a non-unanimous decision easier to manage. We are very grateful for all the hard work the judges have put in over the three years, to produce verdicts in the short space of time between the closing dates and the deadlines for informing the winners.

So far the judges have been able to reach unanimous decisions, although they have been impressed by the universally high standard of all the entries. We have recently awarded prizes for the third year of the competition. Although there were only two entries, involving four competitors, we were pleased to see that they were younger than most of the entrants from previous years. We were also heartened this year to find that both entries consisted of dances written by the young people. We felt that children writing dances during Covid-19 lockdown was a very positive outcome for the competition, suggesting, as the judges said, that the future of Morris is secure.

Sue was a member of Lady Bay Revellers and they kindly donated a beautiful tankard in her memory. The competition winner has a year's custodianship of this tankard engraved with their name, a £100 cash prize and a certificate. The runner up receives a certificate and a £50 cash prize. We also presented a £25 "Highly Commended" cash prize in 2018, the first year of the competition, and this year increased the second prize by the same amount to reflect the three entrants involved and the quality of their entry. The prize fund that has been given out to date has therefore totalled £500.

Originally, we had planned to present prizes at the AGM, but this was already under revision before Covid-19 made a physical AGM impossible. In future, we plan that prizes will be presented in person by a local OM Official, in front of team-mates and local press where possible. We felt this would mean more to the recipient and help to increase the profile of Morris locally. Hopefully it will also raise the profile of the competition amongst local teams and encourage more entries to the competition in future.

Last year, we looked seriously at the future, viability and rationale of the competition. In addition to the prize money, engraving and stationery costs were depleting the available funds, which are ringfenced from the main OM funds. We faced a decision to close the competition after 2020, or begin funding the competition from the main OM funds. However, earlier this year we were delighted to accept generous donations from the Potty Festival Committee and Shinfield Shambles. Totalling £1500, these donations have secured the future of the competition for several years to come.

As a measure of the success of the competition, our inaugural 2018 winner, Conor Smith, has gone on to become a confident member of several Morris Sides and has now joined the Open Morris team as the new Editor of Dancing On. 2018 runner up, Megan Evans, has become widely known for her beautifully drawn Morris related greetings cards. Hopefully the subsequent younger winners will experience similar life changing results!

Jen Cox and Nicki Pickering form the SDA Subcommittee with financial advice from Liz Scholey as OM Treasurer, and input from the other OM Officials as needed. It is the recommendation of the Subcommittee that the competition continues in its current form, and we are delighted that this year's donations encourage and allow this. Whilst we would like to see a wider range of entrants in the future, we do feel that there has already been benefit to the Morris community in the successes of our prizewinners and the engagement of our young entrants during the unusual and difficult events of 2020.

We would urge all member sides to promote the competition to their younger members and encourage them to enter. We would also welcome any feedback or suggestions for encouraging young people to enter the competition.

Please visit the Sue Dyke Award page on the OM website to view the 2020 competition entries!

Jen Cox and Nicki Pickering
SDA Subcommittee