



Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting

Held remotely via Zoom

Sunday 21st November 2021

Meeting commenced at 2.10pm

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

Welcome from the Chair Jen Cox to guests Fee Lock and Pauline Woods-Wilson from The Morris Federation, to Peter Austin from the Morris Ring and Steven Archer and Mike Stimpson from the JMO. Housekeeping notices related to the running of the Zoom meeting.

2. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

Attending:

Open Morris Officials:

Jen Cox, OM Chair, Borderline Morris
John Scholey, OM Membership Secretary, Brooms Bricks and Bowlers
Hetty Bevington, OM Secretary, Tatters Morris
Liz Scholey, OM Treasurer, The Far Side
Malcolm Hills, OM Web Officer, Wharfedale Wayzgoose

Sam Davey, OM South West Area Rep
Robin James, OM East Anglia Area Rep, Fenstanton Morris
Chris Lamb, OM South East Area Rep
Clare Mach, OM South Central Area Rep, Devils Jumps Clog
Lally MacBeth, OM Archivist, Tatters Morris

Nicki Pickering, Wales & NW Area Rep, Life/Individual Member
Craig Simmonds, OM West Midlands Area Rep, Harlequin Morris

Guests:

Fee Lock, Secretary of The Morris Federation -Teller
Pauline Woods-Wilson, President of The Morris Federation
Peter Austin, Bagman of the Morris Ring - Teller
Steven Archer, JMO Treasurer
Mike Stimpson, JMO Insurance Officer, Phoenix Morris

Member Teams Represented:

Bedcote Morris, Sharon Dodd
Beltane Border Morris, Ant Veal
Billy No Mates Electric Morris, Eddie Carter
Borderline Morris, Jen Cox
Brooms Bricks and Bowlers, John Scholey
Bunnies from Hell, Frances Bing
Bury Fair Women's Morris, Gayle Wade
Cadi Ha, Gregg Ashcroft
Devils Jumps Clog, Clare Mach
Earl of Stamford, Alan Goodkin, Lyn Goodkin
Fenstanton Morris, Robin James
Flagcrackers of Craven, Julie Greenwood
Foxy Morris, Ian Hinksman
Harlequin Morris, Craig Simmonds
Holt Ridge Morris, Norm Warren
Minster Strays, Wendy Bostock
Old School Rapper, Eammon Andrews
Phoenix Morris, Michael Stimpson
Rattlejag Morris, Jayne Rose
Shinfield Shambles, Hilary Tindall
Steps in Time, Penny-Jane Swift
Tatters Morris, Hetty Bevington, Lally MacBeth
The Far Side, Liz Scholey
The Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts, Robert Chisholm
Wharfedale Wayzgoose, Malcolm Hills

Individuals:

Nickie Dailly, Individual Member
Kim Woodward, Life Member

Apologies:

Individuals:

Chris Hall (Life Member)
Sophie Watson (Individual Member)

Member Teams:

Buttercross Belles
Camp Clog

Fishbone Ash
Flash Company
Kitchen Taps
Roses are Red
Sowerby Bridge Rushbearing Association
Theale Tattoo
Whitehorn Morris
Yorkshire Coast Morris

2. Minutes of 2020 AGM

These were taken as read.

3. Adoption of Minutes of 2020 AGM

The 2020 minutes were adopted with 20 votes in favour.

	Online	At the AGM
For	13	7
Against	0	0
Abstentions	1	0

5. Matters arising from the Minutes

- a) 9.b) Action for the Committee to discuss the ideas surrounding the diversity motion.

Jen Cox and Liz Scholey attended the diversity conference run by EFDSS this November.

Jen Cox: Conclusion from the conference was that there are no easy answers. There is a problem of diversity across the folk world in general. We can encourage good practice and be open and welcoming to people of all genders, cultures, and ethnicities.

Liz Scholey: Some of it interesting some not, there is a big issue to do with society's perception of folk. What can we achieve? We need to spend more time on it.

Steps in Time, Junior side: We work in primary schools and work with lots of different ethnicities, but we are in N Dorset where there is not a lot of diversity.

Eammon Andrews, Old School Rapper: Didn't agree with the decision last year. We should be more open to other dance styles eg belly dance and bhangra joining us. At a group level not just welcoming individuals into our groups.

Mike Stimpson, JMO Insurance Officer: These issues are to do with the definition of Morris Dancing, and the types of insurable activity. We need to keep the premiums as low as we possibly can for our members.

Sharon Dodd, Bedcote: We talk about diversity but our insurance and the name of the organisation are barriers.

Jen Cox: As a festival organiser I strive to include more diverse dance groups at events, and see a growing trend towards this sort of practice at a lot of events, which is excellent.

Mike Stimpson: The groups that were not from a Morris background that approached us about membership were offered help to set up a similar dancing organisation.

Ian Hinksman, Foxs Morris: Suggestion to set up an event with groups from other dance styles and insurers and start to work out a solution to becoming more diverse.

Fee Lock: Groups outside Morris who have sought membership in the past have done so only to gain insurance. We have to work within the limits of our insurance underwriters, for instance Carnival morris is not currently insured through our policy. We need to apply realistic and objective criteria for membership.

Malcolm Hills: We can still enjoy and interact with other dance forms even if they are not members of our organisation.

Norm Warren: Disabled dancers should be included in this discussion, well done to all those who work with disabled people. Change the constitution to talk about traditional dance rather than morris; this could be inclusive.

Peter Austin: the reason why Appalachian included in the morris world is due to its origins and links to Cecil Sharp, it's a mix of Irish and English folk dance.

Liz Scholey: I feel we need to take this forward; how do we become more inclusive? It's difficult to come up with achievable objectives but this is what we must try to do. The committee welcomes input from other members who would like to provide some input into these discussions.

b) 14. Covid-19 updates

Jen gave a vote of thanks to Sally Wearing, Health and Safety adviser to the Morris Federation, for her work in signposting the relevant government guidance for us during the pandemic. Infection rates are rising again, and we are seeing teams making their own decisions about practicing and dancing out. We can only offer our members signposts to appropriate government guidance, we are not as an organisation able to interpret the law, but we will do our best to keep our membership well informed.

Thank you to everyone who has responded to our post covid email survey, the majority of these responses have been positive and it's good to hear a number of sides are managing to recruit new members.

6. Officers' Reports, Officers' comments, and queries from the floor:

- a) Chair
- b) Membership Secretary
- c) Secretary

These were taken as read.

d) Web Officer – due to ill health Malcolm Hills has been unable to prepare a report, he has however done a great deal of work towards the smooth running of the AGM, and has been able to continue to maintain the website for us, for which we are very grateful, and we're very pleased to have him with us today on the mend.

e) Treasurer – Liz Scholey spoke to introduce her report: Thank you to teams who donated fees for this year. We are in a better financial situation than I had anticipated after deciding to waive subs for our members this year. After some discussion, the committee feel that we are not in a position to waive subs again this year, however We do recognise that some teams may still be experiencing financial difficulties due to the pandemic, and they can apply to the committee to pay a reduced rate of £15. We will be asking for subscriptions as usual for 2022, and the rate will be £35.00 for early bird renewal. In addition, we do have a small amount of money that could be spent on initiatives.

- f) Adoption of Treasurer's report

	Online	At the AGM
For	13	7
Against	0	0
Abstentions	1	0

The Treasurer's report was duly adopted.

7. Other Officials' Reports, and queries from the floor:

a. Archivist – Lally Macbeth

Lally is hopeful to make quick progress in cataloguing the Archive materials she's now received, please do get in touch if you have any items to add to the archive.

b. Area Representatives:

- Wales & North West – Nicki Pickering
- East Anglia – Robin James
- South East – Chris Lamb
- Central – Jenny Cox
- South Central – Clare Mach

These were taken as read.

8. Election of Officers:

a) Chair – Jen Cox

Proposed by Nicki Pickering and seconded by Wharfedale Wayzgoose

	Online	At the AGM
For	21	3
Against	0	0
Abstentions	1	0

b) Membership Secretary – John Scholey

Proposed by Shinfield Shambles and seconded by Roses are Red

	Online	At the AGM
For	13	7
Against	0	0
Abstentions	1	0

c) Secretary – Hetty Bevington

Proposed Tatters Morris and seconded by Theale Tattoo

	Online	At the AGM
For	20	3
Against	0	0
Abstentions	1	0

d) Treasurer – Liz Scholey

Proposed by Borderline Morris and seconded by The Far Side

	Online	At the AGM
For	21	3
Against	0	0
Abstentions	1	0

e) Web Officer – Malcolm Hills

Proposed by Wharfedale Wayzgoose and seconded by Lepton Morris

	Online	At the AGM
For	22	3
Against	0	0
Abstentions	0	0

All Officers were duly elected.

9. Appointment of Officials

There are no new Officials to appoint this year. The post of Magazine Editor is vacant, and we would welcome applications from anyone who is interested in this role. Jen Cox thanked outgoing Editor Conor Smith, and all the other Officials, for their hard work and friendship throughout the year.

10. Appointment of Independent Reviewer

Liz Scholey confirmed that Steven Archer is happy to continue in this role and thanked him for his work this year.

11. Nominations for Honorary / Life Membership

None submitted.

12. Motions

None submitted.

13. The Covid-19 Pandemic

General discussion of measures some teams have been taking to remain safe at practice. A lot of teams are taking lateral flow tests before coming out, and some are encouraging mask wearing though others find dancing in masks difficult. Ventilation is very important. One team reported unfortunately having to ask a member to leave as their views of covid risk did not align with those of the rest of the side. Please feel free to get in touch with Open Morris if you are affected by issues such as this. Norm Warren, Holt Ridge Morris, noted that government guidance was at the time of the AGM out of date, though this has since been updated, and we will endeavour to keep our membership informed of any updates that affect us. Gayle Wade, Bury Fair Women's Morris, noted that she uses the Zoe app to record symptoms and would recommend the app, which may give easier access to covid testing.

14. Secretary's Guide

The OM committee noted that they had made a small alteration to this document, to reflect current practice surrounding voting. The previous version of the guide refers to 'Absentee Voting' which due to changes in technology and the recent need for online meetings, was incorrect. Huge thanks are due to Malcolm Hills for hard and laborious work getting the online voting system set up. Now we have this excellent system we are likely to keep it for the future, and we are considering how to proceed with hybrid meetings in the future, to keep the greater accessibility the pandemic has given us, whilst enjoying the benefits of face to face meetings as well.

15. Joint Morris Organisations Business

The JMO have continued to meet regularly on zoom this year, and Jen would like to thank the JMO Committee for tolerating her as Chair for 2021! The next JMO event is The JMO Day of Dance in Liverpool on Saturday 9th April, organised by the Morris Ring. We hope to see many of our member teams there.

16. The Sue Dyke Award

The Sue Dyke Award, OM's annual competition for young people. Sue Dyke was a past OM official, and the award was started in her name to support and encourage young people in the morris world. The original fund for the competition was kindly donated by Sue's widower, Ken Dyke, from funeral collections, and the fund has since received generous donations from Lobster Potties Festival and Shinfield Shambles Morris. This year's competition unfortunately received no entries, so the SDA subcommittee (Jen Cox and Nicki Pickering) wished to discuss this with the membership. Could bad timing with the end of covid restrictions have been a factor, or are we running out of eligible entrants?

Individual member Nickie Dailly, who would have been eligible to enter the competition, discussed the wording centring the competition around 'morris' as potentially exclusive, as she is a Step Clog and Molly dancer and doesn't think of herself as a 'morris' dancer. This prompted a discussion of how young people identify in the morris world and concluded that young people might need support and encouragement from their teams in order to enter.

It was concluded that although no one factor is likely to have been the whole cause of the lack of entries, that the bad timing is likely to have been a significant one, so we should run the competition again next year in a similar format and then take stock more fully. If anyone has any ideas or comments about the competition, please get in touch with chair@open-morris.org.

17. The Doug Pickering Memorial Fund

This fund has had one successful applicant since it's inauguration, there is still funding available should anyone wish to apply. The fund is for new teams to help with equipment purchase. Any enquiries should be sent to chair@open-morris.org.

18. JMO notes to member teams travelling to the EU

Eddie Worrall, Past Ring Squire and JMO Committee member, has kindly prepared a document outlining some of the issues teams need to consider when dancing abroad. This is available on the 'Documents' page of the OM website. Many thanks to Eddie for undertaking this work.

Mike Stimpson, JMO Insurance Officer, noted that though there is no additional insurance premium applicable, teams must still inform him prior to a trip abroad, in

order for the existing Public Liability insurance cover to be valid. Mike's contact details are available on the OM website.

18. Any Other Business (items at Chair's discretion, subject to time)

Norm Warren, Holt Ridge Morris wished to thank all the sides and people who contributed in the last two years to the fundraiser in honour of his late partner Cath Mew, fundraising for Hospice in the Weald. A sum of nearly £4000 has been raised, some of this through selling donated instruments. Here is the link to the fundraiser: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/cath-mew>

19. Date and venue of next AGM

The provisional date for the 2022 AGM is Sunday 20th November. Things are still a little uncertain due to the pandemic, so we will be taking a decision about the format of the AGM nearer the time, and also investigating options to run a hybrid meeting with a physical location as well as an option to log in remotely. Please get in touch if you would be interested in hosting a physical AGM. Hopefully it can involve dancing and cake!

20. Close of AGM

Jen Cox thanked our guests and those who acted as Tellers, and thanked all those in attendance. The meeting closed at 4.06pm.

Appendices

1. Officers' Reports
2. Officials' Reports
3. Secretary's Guide