

THE MORRIS FEDERATION

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MORRIS FEDERATION

Held at The Canalhouse, 48 - 52 Canal Street, Nottingham NG1 7EH on Saturday 24th September 2016

Melanie Barber (President) opened the 41st annual general meeting of the Morris Federation at 1630 hours and confirmed that the meeting was quorate. She added that we had found a flute/whistle, should anyone recognise it. She welcomed Adam Garland, immediate past Squire of the Morris Ring, and Nicki Pickering, Chair of Open Morris. No representative from EFDSS or AFO was present. **Fee Lock (Secretary)** announced those who were present

Alton Morris	Minster Strays
Anstey Royal Chalfont	Mortimer's Morris
Berkshire Bedlam	New Esperance Morris
Beverley Garland Dancers	New St George
Bishop's Morris	Persephone Women's NW Morris
Claudentum	Red Cuthbert Morris
Customs & Exiles	Ripley Green Garters
Dorset Buttons North West Morris	Rockhopper Morris
Dorset Buttons Rapper	Sharp & Blunt
Five River's Morris	Strictly Clog
Goathland Ploughstots	Taff Rapper
Greenwood Step Clog	Three Spires Morris
Hertfordshire Holly	Three's A Crowd
Jackstraws	Wakefield Morris
Jerusalem Jammers	Westrefelda
Mabel Gubbins	William Morris
Mad Jack's Morris	Windsor Morris
Maltby Sword Dancers	

1 Apologies

Babylon	Knights of King Ina
Betty Lupton's Ladle Laikers	Leek Morris
Boughton Monchelsea Morris	Locksided Rapper
Buttercross Belles	Locos in Motion
Chinewrde	Merrydowners
Coton Morris	Milkmaid Molly
Cricket on the Hearth	Mish Mash
Dartmoor Border Morris	Moll de Mer
Ditchling Morris	Mr Wilkin's Shilling
Dr Turberville's Morris	Nonesuch
Ebor Morris	Old Speckled Hen
Eccleston Heritage Clog	Oojah Kappivvy
Ellington Morris	Oyster Girls
First Class Stamp	Pigsty
First Class Stamp	Pretty Grim
Flagcrackers of Craven	Queen's Oak
Hannah's Cat	Red Stags
Hastings Jack in the Green	Sheffield Celebrated Clog Dancers
Herring Gals	Shrewsbury Morris
Hips & Haws Clog	Somerset Morris
Hong Kong Morris	Somerstep
Hook Eagle Morris Men	Taepas Tump

Kern Morris
Kettle Bridge Clogs
Knickerbocker Glory

Three Shires Morris
Winter Warmers

Individual members' apologies:

Jane Cunio
Karen & Colin Cater
Steve Cunio

2 Minutes of the Previous Minutes

Taken as read. **Shirley Dixon (Jackstraws)** pointed out in the Archive Officer's report that Val Parker (Honorary Member) was a co-author of the forthcoming *The History of the Morris Federation*. The rest of the minutes were proposed as being correct by **Selam Adamu (Customs & Exiles)**, seconded by **Diane Moody (New Esperance)**. They were voted as correct unanimously.

3 Matters Arising

None.

4 Officers' Reports

These had been circulated and taken as read. **Jerry West (Notation Officer)** mentioned an addendum to his: Cardiff Ladies Morris had disbanded and only *some* members have moved over only to Cardiff Morris. **Edwin Dyson (Taff Rapper)** congratulated **Sam Ross (Newsletter Editor)** on her new editions and wanted to record his thanks. **Jenny Everett (Treasurer)** thanked Eddie Worrall of the Morris Ring for independently verifying her accounts.

5 Motion

**TO REPLACE THE EXISTING BURSARY POLICY WITH A NEW SPONSORSHIP,
GRANTS & BURSARY POLICY.**

As this had been proposed by **Melanie Barber (President)** and seconded by **Fee Lock (Secretary)**, **Jerry West (Notation Officer)** took the Chair: The current policy issued in 2011 arose from a discussion about supporting youth attending Morris events and had now served its purpose in making Member sides aware of the facility, however, it is rather wordy, a little limited in its scope, and the new policy makes it easier for applicants and for the committee to administer.

Edwin Dyson (Taff Rapper), who is organising Dancing England in February, said that he had applied using the new form and it all worked extremely smoothly. The Motion was proposed by **Melanie Barber (President)** and seconded by **Fee Lock (Secretary)**. Adam Garland of the Morris Ring and Nicki Pickering of Open Morris had been asked to be tellers.

The votes at the meeting were as follows:
280 votes in favour
0 votes against
0 abstentions

The postal votes received were as follows:
140 votes in favour
0 votes against
0 abstentions

With 420 votes in favour, 0 votes against and 0 abstentions, the Motion was carried.

6 Discussion

Discussion on the impact of blacking up in Morris dancing.

Melanie Barber (President) reiterated that the purpose of this debate was to share the legal advice and the objective is to agree a way forward and advice to members. She read from her preface, which is cut and pasted here:

The aim of the discussion is for The Morris Federation committee to share any legal advice they have obtained so far to the membership, and give the membership an opportunity to air their views on the impact of blacking up in Morris dancing.

The objective is to agree a way forward by way of guidelines to members.

Before we start, could I check that everyone collected a copy of the latest solicitor advice that we received this week?

I'd also like to reiterate the **Discussion Rules**, which were circulated with the AGM papers:

Members are asked to respect the rules in order to allow as many as want to speak time to speak.

Only Morris Federation members may join in the discussion, unless specifically invited to speak by the chairperson.

Members wishing to speak must make their intent known to the chairperson at least ten minutes prior to the AGM commencing. They will be issued with a ticket, on which they should write their name and the name of the team they are representing, and hand it back to a delegated member of the committee when they are called to speak.

Speakers will be allowed to speak for a maximum of three minutes. Please note, this could be reduced depending on the number of members wishing to speak.

Speakers will be given one minute, and a subsequent thirty-second warning of the time they have left to speak.

Having spoken once, no speaker may address the meeting again (as part of this discussion) until everyone wishing to speak has been heard. If time allows then the chairperson may invite people to speak again. This is not an interactive debate, but rather a platform for members' views to be heard.

We decided as a committee to seek legal advice, which we have shared with you, and we see this discussion as an opportunity for members to share their views, and have access to the same information in order to make an informed decision.

The solicitor has provided us with draft guidelines to members, and we would welcome your views on those as well.

There are some very strong views around, and whether you agree or not with those views, we are all entitled to our own view, and I would ask that you respect that, be considerate of other speakers, and allow members to speak without interruption.

We have three speakers, but before I ask the first speaker to address the meeting, I would like to introduce you to Phillip Rostant, who is a member of William Morris, but is also works as an Employment Judge.

Phillip has kindly offered to act as a point of clarification, and has agreed to give us a short overview on the law as it stands.

We also have Jon Brenner with us, who is representing Five Rivers, but is also one of the organisers for Shrewsbury Festival, and has permission to speak on their behalf.

Jon Payne, the solicitor we engaged, wrote this:

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LSL solicitors is a RSP law firm authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority. Principal : J Payne Consultant : D Foster For details of other lawyers, please contact our office. VAT No: 183 3982 75 SRA Registration No : 614036 ICO Registration : ZA069685

21 Sep 2016
Dear Sirs,

Re : 'Blacking up' of Morris Performers

Thank you for your kind instructions to advise you on the question of the 'blacking up' of faces by Morris Dancers and Performers.

You will of course be entirely familiar with the origins of Morris dancing, but it is worth re-iterating here for the sake of completeness. Morris dancing has been a folk tradition since at least the early 16th century. It was documented during the lifetime of Shakespeare when a Globe actor Will Kemp danced from London to Norwich. The blackening of faces is seen as a part of this traditional dance along with bells, handkerchiefs and sticks. At present, only a proportion of Morris dancers apply black to their faces and the extent of this application varies from a disc-shaped appearance on the face to full face and neck coverage. Application to the hands or arms is not, to the best of our knowledge, seen. Some dancers do apply different colours and we are aware of red and multiple colours being used.

There are a variety of suggestions as to why black is applied. The widely-held belief is that poor 16th century farm labourers felt the need to disguise their faces when begging in the winter months, or undertaking other activities, so their employers did not recognise them. Another suggestion is that the dances have evolved from North Africa so the blackening of faces is mimicking the Moorish dancers. There have of course been occasions where white performers have applied makeup to their bodies, such as in the American minstrel shows which seem to overtly portray black people performing and were seen in the UK through "The Black and White Minstrel Show" that ran from 1958 to 1978.

The question that you have asked is whether there is any liability that might be attached to the Federation or performers because of those troops that decide to apply black make-up. There are several pieces of legislation that could be considered to have some bearing on this matter, principally the Public Order Act 1986, The Theatres Act 1968 and the Equality Act 2010, which of course replaced much of the discrimination legislation that was in force before it was implemented. In evaluating the law, we have also considered potential common law offences, such as that of Public Nuisance, but do not feel that they are particularly relevant.

One of the aims of the Public Order Act 1986 was to control 'the stirring up of racial hatred'. This act incorporates elements of the Race Relations Act 1965 and the Theatres Act 1968 s5. Under section 18, it is an offence for a person to use 'threatening, abusive or insulting words or behavior which' is likely to stir up racial hatred. This of course is not the intent of performers, which would rule out the provisions of 18(1)(a) where intent is key. Section 18(1)(b) refers to "having regard to all the circumstances racial hatred is likely to be stirred up thereby". It seems unlikely to us that the circumstances of Morris dancing with blackened faces would fulfill this criteria either. There is in any case a defence under section 18 (5), which states "a person who is not shown to have intended to stir up racial hatred is not guilty of an offence under this section if he did not intend his words or behaviour, or the written material, to be, and was not aware that it might be, threatening, abusive or insulting". Our view is therefore that it would be unlikely that any action under this legislation would be successful.

Of more relevance is the Equality Act 2010, which refers, in section 13, to discrimination. In order for there to be discrimination, a person must treat another less favourably than others due to one of the 7 "protected characteristics". These protected characteristics include race. For discrimination to be shown, it would at least be necessary to show that blackened face dancers did represent a particular race and that they are treated differently to their fellow dancers. There is not segregation or differentiation between the dancers so this rule would probably not be worth exploring further.

Section 26 of the Equality Act 2010 takes a slightly different approach by referring to harassment, which is defined as follows:

"(1) A person (A) harasses another (B) if—

(a) A engages in unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, and

(b) the conduct has the purpose or effect of—

(i) violating B's dignity, or

(ii) creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for B.

(2) In deciding whether conduct has the effect referred to in subsection (1)(b), each of the following must be taken into

account—

(a) the perception of B;

(b) the other circumstances of the case;

(c) whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have that effect."

This definition is very different to that in many other statutes, where some 'alarm or distress', such as in the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, where it is necessary to show that the behaviour was targeted at an individual or closely related group (such as an ethnic group) and calculated to cause alarm or distress in a way that is oppressive and unreasonable.

It will be seen that the common factor in the legislation is the question of 'reasonableness'. A court would therefore need to determine whether or not it was reasonable for the blacking up of the performers to violate a persons dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. The environment has to be set in the context of the performance, which is almost exclusively one of celebration and entertainment rather than singling out a particular race to humiliate, offend, intimidate or degrade. Our view is that this is the fundamental issue upon which any legal action would turn.

Before this, however, the question would be whether the blacking up does indeed reflect a matter of race. This is where we believe that the importance of the history is pertinent, along with the extent to which blacking up takes place. Our view is that if the blacking up is purely to the front of the face and not to the neck, ears, arms or hands then it would be difficult to substantiate that there is a depiction of race taking place.

The blacking of the face has also to be taken in context with the performer's attire and the nature of the performance that is given. Some performers dress all in black and others have brightly coloured elements. Together, it could be argued that the appearance does not reasonably constitute and approximation to the appearance of a person of a particular race. Likewise, we would suggest that the activity of dancing does not form an approximation of a particular race and some dances are to the untrained eye very similar to those performed by dancers in the more common white outfits with no face paint applied. It should be recognised that the Equality Act 2010 is primarily concerned with discrimination and in this case dealing with people of different races in different ways. The difficulty with this is that the construction of section 26 does not address itself to the matter of comparisons at all.

You will appreciate that there is very little case law that can be relied upon which accurately reflects the question of blacking up of performers in a public environment. Most actions have been taken through the forum of the Employment Tribunal.

Some themes that do emerge are that there is no need for the person

making a complaint to be part of the group that is alleged to be harassed (Thomas Sanderson Blinds Ltd v English [2011] Eq. L.R. 688).

In determining the question of whether the conduct has the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, the courts have still looked at whether there was an intent to cause offence and it would not be enough to simply show that the person making the complaint was made to feel uncomfortable - a much more significant impact is needed (Richmond Pharmacology Ltd v Dhaliwal [2009] I.C.R. 724). This provides some degree of reassurance for performers who find themselves caught between the balance of performing a cultural activity and political correctness.

In evaluating the current position and the guidance attached, we have sought to elicit some input from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, a statutory body that has been established to look at matter of equality. Regrettably, they felt that they could not provide any advice whatsoever on the matter. Likewise, we have approached a number of other bodies who also declined to provide any assistance.

Our advice needs to be that performers need to take a sensitive attitude to the way that they attire themselves and perform. In particular they should not set out to portray a person of particular race by what they wear or the way that they act. We hope that the attached guidance should be of some assistance to your members and the Federation itself. To deal with the question of liability of the Federation, we do not believe that there would be liability under the Equality Act as it would not be the Federation that would be undertaking the activity.

Should you not be aware of it, a thesis was produced by Patricia Bater in 2013 that looked at the wider issues of blacking up rather than the specific legal position. Although it is just over 280 pages long, it does set out and explore many of the issues that arise. We refer in our proposed guidance that there should be information available to the public about the traditions of Morris dancing and this document might assist greatly in that process. Perhaps a leaflet on the Morris tradition is something that the Federation might consider producing for its members. We can provide you with a copy of the thesis if you do not have one.

If we can be of any further assistance, please let us know.
Yours faithfully,

LSL Solicitors

Melanie Barber (President) introduced **Philip Rostant**, an employment judge and member of William Morris, to give an overview, which he has emailed as a summary:

Summary of my presentation to the AGM Morris Federation 2016-09-26

I introduced myself as a dancer and a Judge whose work entailed dealing with the Equality Act 2010.

I explained that although I had done as much research into the origins and current state of the debate, I had done so in order not to give my own view of what Morris sides who were members of the Federation ought to do, but rather to make sure that the information I was giving about the law was relevant.

I explained that although I understood that the debate about "blacking up" had been running for some time, the Equality Act 2010 may have had the effect of shifting the focus rather.

I then proceeded to explain that the Equality Act did not create any criminal offences and that although I am not an expert in the criminal law, as far as I could see the Federation had had advice about that aspect of the law which was reassuring and which I trusted was correct.

I went on to explain that the Equality Act gave rise to the possibility of a civil action brought in the County Court for damages.

I then outlined the structure of the Act. I explained the concept of protected characteristics (race, age, gender etc) and the fact that the Act also set out categories of conduct, which were prohibited under the Act when directed at, or related to, protected characteristics. These include harassment and I provided a handout, which set out the relevant parts of S26 of the Act, which defined harassment. I then explained that the Act covered the providers of goods and services.

I explained that there was no case law but that I thought that a likely interpretation of the Act would include both the Federation and individual sides as covered by the Act as providers of the service of entertainment although I could not be sure of that. I thought that any likely claim in this context would be a claim for harassment related to race.

I then broke down the constituent parts of the definition of harassment.

"Unwanted conduct"-I explained that this would be for the claimant to show but that it would be difficult to disprove.

"Related to the protected characteristic" (in this case race)-I explained that this did not mean "because of" race. In other words, it did not require motivation on the part of the alleged harasser.

I then explained what the conduct had to constitute-

I then explained that the Act required that if a person complained that the conduct had the "effect" of violating their dignity or creating a

humiliating or offensive environment, it had to be reasonable for them to feel that effect.

I pointed out that most of the population had little of no understanding of the origins of blackface disguise in Morris, albeit that the research shows that even those origins are not the subject of consensus.

I went on to point out that most of the population's only connection with the practice of "blacking up" will have been from minstrelsy and specifically from the 1970s Black and White Minstrels. I explained that that created the possibility of a perception on the part of a member of the public coming across a side performing, that the blacking up in Morris came from the same source, which was of course specifically a reference to race and one moreover which was aimed at the mimicking by white people of black people. I thought that that might be enough to satisfy a court that the conduct was "related to race" and that it was reasonable for the complainant to say that they found the conduct humiliating or offensive.

I also pointed out that a complainant need not themselves be black or from a minority ethnic group. A white person could plausibly make a complaint.

I explained that I was not here to give advice or to express a personal view as to what sides should do.

I pointed out that what was desirable was not to successfully defend a claim but rather to avoid a claim at all.

I said that Morris sides all occupied a place on a spectrum of risk, which was defined at one end, by sides using black colour make up and at the other by sides who did not disguise themselves at all. I pointed out that it seemed logical to assume that the further sides got away from black makeup, the further sides would get away from the suggestion that what they were doing when adopting a disguise was related to race.

I finished by saying that sides now needed to consider what they ought to do and that was a separate matter from what the Federation itself ought to do, something which I understood was likely to be addressed at a later point.

Separately, and to the Committee, I made it clear that I was happy to continue to offer clarification and help in the future if needed.

Phil Rostant

Employment Judge
William Morris

Section 26 of the Equality Act 2010:

26 Harassment

(1) A person (A) harasses another (B) if—

(a) A engages in unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, and

(b) the conduct has the purpose or effect of—

(i) violating B's dignity, or

(ii) creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for B.

(2) A also harasses B if—

(a) A engages in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, and

(b) the conduct has the purpose or effect referred to in subsection (1)(b).

(3) A also harasses B if—

(a) A or another person engages in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or that is related to gender reassignment or sex,

(b) the conduct has the purpose or effect referred to in subsection (1)(b), and

(c) because of B's rejection of or submission to the conduct, A treats B less favourably than A would treat B if B had not rejected or submitted to the conduct.

(4) In deciding whether conduct has the effect referred to in subsection (1)(b), each of the following must be taken into account—

(a) the perception of B;

(b) the other circumstances of the case;

(c) whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have that effect.

(5) The relevant protected characteristics are—

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

The crux of Section 26 - '... conducted related to ... [race]', so a person doesn't have to have the motivation to offend or harrassment.

He thinks that 99% population doesn't know the background to blacking up and that they will link it to the *Black and White Minstrels* of the 1970s. This is probably enough to convince a court that this is reasonable to offend a person.

Philip is not giving advice nor is he offering his opinion.

CONCLUSION

1 This is not about winning a case it's about avoiding a case in the first place

2 Spectrum of risk - from sides which blacking up all the way to sides, which put on no disguise at all.

The committee has a view as to what it will do as a Federation.

The meeting thanked him with a round of applause.

Melanie Barber (President) reminded the meeting of the rules of the discussion:

- (i) Members are to respect the rules in order to allow as many as may want to speak time to speak;
- (ii) Only Morris Federation members may join in the discussion, unless specifically invited to speak by the Chairperson;
- (iii) Members wishing to speak must make their intent known to the Chairperson at least ten minutes prior to the AGM commencing. They will be issued with a ticket, on which they should write their name and the name of the team they are representing, and hand it back to a delegated member of the committee when they are called to speak; Speakers will be allowed a maximum of three minutes. Please note, this could be reduced depending on the number of members wishing to speak;
- (iv) Speakers will be given a one-minute and then a thirty-second warning of the time they have left to speak;
- (v) Having spoken once, no speaker may address the meeting again as part of this discussion until everyone wishing to speak as been heard. If time allows, then the Chairperson may invite people to speak again. This is not an interactive debate, but rather a platform for members' views to be heard.

Selam Adamu (Customs and Exiles) had prepared a statement, which she read out:

As a black woman living for most of my life in the UK, I've experienced racism in various forms, from racial slurs to what a black friend of mine terms 'benign racism' - well-intentioned stereotyping etc.

I've been involved in morris dancing since 2009 when I joined a border side and I am now heavily involved in the morris world, which I have found to be very welcoming. It would be wrong to say I haven't experienced any racism within the scene but it has been way below the average.

Two of my local border sides use full-face black makeup. It has never occurred to me to take offence at this and one of the sides had a black dancer who also wore the facepaint. If asked, they explain it's a disguise, traditionally for protecting the identity of people dancing as a form of begging. There is historic documentation to support this, although the practice, along with morris dancing altogether, has no currently known proven origin. I'm no academic and I'm sure there are people more equipped to continue this research but I'd argue that, due to the history of Britain, it is likely that if we look far enough back into the origins of any of our cultural traditions, we are likely to find links with racism, sexism and oppression.

It is my personal view that the pressure group, FRESH, from a county with a black population of less than 600 (in over 300,000), have not really chosen this issue to make a stand against racism. In fact, from their own notification to the morris sides, they acknowledge that the prevailing view is that the practice isn't racist. Instead, they've chosen this topic as one to generate the publicity they need, as a consultancy company, to increase their income.

What I find much more worrying is that organisations such as EFDSS are choosing to impose a blanket ban on the practice of blacking up, instead of adhering to their own mission of educating on English traditional folk arts.

In past discussions, including FRESH's message, about the practice of blacking up, many people have referenced blackface minstrels. What seems to be lost in those arguments is that the minstrels shows were not racist because they painted their faces black. They were racist because they mocked black people and culture by enacting stereotyped cultural behaviour to belittle what they considered to be inferior races. Aside from the use of black facepaint, there is no similarity between this practice and morris and molly. I've referred the question to black friends and acquaintances from outside of the folk world and they have agreed with this.

Like me, they've also expressed distaste at decisions about what we should find offensive being made on our behalf.

I'd also argue against the idea, which I've heard used in these discussions that if even one person is offended by something, it should be stopped. If this is your view, you should probably give up everything now! Being offended is a choice of the individual and everyone will be offended by different things.

People have argued that the colour of facepaint is not material to the standard the performance. I strongly disagree with this. Whilst impressive kit does not make up for poor quality dancing, it does add to the overall show. I've personally been disappointed to see sides who have moved away from blacking up, not because their standard of dancing has changed but because in my view they have lost some of their defining character. The colour black provides the most effective mask for disguising faces and expressions and sides who used to use this technique no longer present the same air of anonymous menace.

Having said that, any decisions around kit should be up to the individual side. I feel that the morris organisations, and wider folk community, should support their choices rather than dictate for them and should be proud of the diversity of traditions. No side who chooses to remain blacked up should be labelled racist because this simply isn't true.

I'd much prefer to see the morris world move genuinely towards more equality and a lack of racism than sacrificing the blacking up tradition as lip service.

Melanie Barber (President) invited **Jon Brenner (Five Rivers)** to give a clarification on behalf of the English Folk Dance & Song Society (EFDSS):

EFDSS has not banned blacking up, or tried to. We do not use images of blacked up morris people in our materials*. This is a result of feedback from teachers that who feel unable to use teaching resources that used these images. We do not engage blacked up teams for our events for similar reasons. The full statement on this is on our website.

: they have not banned the use of black face morris. They do not use publicity materials nor do they engage with black face morris dancing, and this is on the back of feedback of teachers and users. This has been in place for three to four years.

Diane Moody (New Esperance Morris) they are hosting the AGM in 2018 in London. They will be using C#H, the headquarters of EFDSS. She went to their website to see what they had as their policy, which has been cut and pasted to form these minutes:

"Following the decision of Shrewsbury Folk Festival not to programme dance sides that "black-up" and the ensuing publicity this brought, EFDSS would like to be clear about its position.

As we understand, historically dancers used soot or burnt cork to disguise their faces but there is evidence to suggest that the boot-polish, full-face, blacking-up tradition gained popularity during the boom of the late 19th Century Minstrelsy tradition.

EFDSS wants to engage all people in the folk arts, regardless of sex, age, race and religion, so we do not support actions that can alienate sectors of the community. We use contemporary images of dance sides that disguise their faces with the use of masks or non-black paint and patterns in our print, online, and teaching resources, and engage such dance sides for EFDSS events and education projects"

She went on to express her concerns that as they will be arranging tours in London, and as a Londoner herself, she would feel uncomfortable sitting next to a blacked-up Morris Federation AGM attendee on the tube or other form of public transport. Her personal view is that blacking up has had its day.

She would like to be able to include a statement from the Morris Federation in the run-up to the AGM in 2018.

Jon Brenner (Five Rivers Morris) said that the EFDSS will shortly publish academic research on the history of blacking up. However, he offered this personal view:

Hi, I'm Jon Brenner from Five Rivers Morris. Like others contributing, I will be speaking for myself rather than the team.

I'm contributing to this debate because I think it is important to have a range of informed views on an issue that ultimately affects all of us through the perception of morris traditions.

Before I speak for myself, I would like to pass on a message from the English Folk Dance & Song Society, whose Board meeting I left a little early to join this AGM. EFDSS will shortly be publishing a summary of the existing academic research into the origins of blacking up, which many have called for, and a re-articulation of the organisation's approach to it. I encourage you to keep an eye out for it.

The rest of this statement is my personal view, and one that has changed over time however suspect will not alter again soon. For me morris, like other folk arts, is a living tradition. As such I am most interested in its impact now rather than its history. This impact is about perception as well as intent, and negative perception of blacking up is real and multiple – I could name at least a dozen instances of people from BAME backgrounds who are offended by it, and that's just me.

For me, it is a balance between changing make up or disguise of a hobby versus contributing (however unintentionally) to societal inequality. Costume, to my mind, is trivial compared to encouraging others' prejudice or reducing inclusion in morris, folk and wider communities.

Others on social media have relayed conversations when the tradition has been explained and found to be okay or acceptable. My concern is the conversation we don't hear that goes on that evening, conversations like:

"Mummy, why were those people wearing black face paint? Why were you so cross?"

"Because dear, some people don't like people like us and think it's okay to mock us."

Because of this, I feel blacking up is no longer sensible or appropriate in modern society, and urge those that do it to continue to consider their position and the impact of our hobby.

On the Federation [draft] guidance, I feel this is a sensible approach and would thoroughly support it.

Thank you for your time."

Julie Greenwood, Squire of Flagcrackers of Craven, submitted the following email for consideration:

The side has discussed at length the blacking up debate and have posted a statement on our position on our Facebook page see below;

" The Flagcrackers of Craven border morris side black up their faces when dancing out. The style is full black face cover. There is no racist intent, it is done entirely with regard to the tradition of disguise"

Please see the link to an article in the Yorkshire Times it also appeared in local newspapers the Craven Herald, and Telegraph and Argus.

<http://www.yorkshiretimes.co.uk/article/Flagcrackers-Bordering-On-Furious-At-Racist-Allegations>

It was reassuring to see responses from Legal Advisor Jon Payne and it will be interesting to see how the discussion develops at the AGM. Following the outcome of the AGM discussion we plan to have a side meeting to agree how we will address any issues raised.

We hope that you have a fabulous day of dance in Nottingham and a constructive discussion at the AGM

Kind regards
Julie Greenwood Squire of Flagcrackers of Craven

Janet Hindle, Secretary of Buttercross Belles, submitted the following email for consideration:

I write to give the apologies of The Buttercross Belles, as unfortunately we are unable to come to the Morris Federation AGM this year.

We have read and discussed the background papers in the AGM pack for the discussion on the impact of blacking up in morris dancing and members of The Belles agreed that I should write to the Morris Federation to make our views known.

We were dismayed to learn that the Shrewsbury Folk Festival organisers have taken the decision this year not to book sides wearing full-face black make-up, following the accusations of racism at the previous year's festival. Not least on the basis of only one complaint.

The Buttercross Belles are strongly of the view that the Morris Federation should support Border Morris sides who wish to continue this tradition.

We find the FRESH position that blacking up should be discontinued because 'the wider public and audiences are not aware of the history, and if they think about it at all are more likely to associate it with the Black & White minstrels and similar acts', a spurious and unconvincing argument. In our view, Border Morris teams who continue the tradition are not racist in intent and they are not seeking to portray a racial group or to offend.

As our Squire, Clare King, said about one of our local Border sides: 'As fairly close neighbours to The Flagcrackers we find ourselves dancing at the same events on a regular basis. As a side their company is enjoyable, their dancing entertaining, their music inspiring. We find them friendly - always, enthusiastic - usually, drunk - occasionally, but racist - never!!!

There is, clearly, a need to educate and explain the tradition to audiences, festival organisers and the media. We hope that The Morris Federation will take a lead in a national media campaign and provide educational materials for use at events. Skipton based, Flagcrackers have recently achieved some excellent coverage in the local press in Yorkshire.

Our experience at festivals and days of dance is that people of different ethnic groups who we have chatted to express interest in all forms of Morris dancing and have not shown concern or disapproval. This summer for example we had a good conversation with an Asian family, who watching a Border team dance were interested to learn of the origins of blacking up and tatters, and in return shared their dance traditions with us.

The legal advice provided to the Federation via the Association of Festival Organisers seems reasonably reassuring. The suggestion that the Federation should speak formally to the Equality & Human Rights Commission and produce a guidance note sounds sensible advice.

We hope you have a positive and constructive discussion at the AGM, and a very enjoyable day of dance in Nottingham.

[Morris Federation Secretary's note: Every care has been taken to ensure that either submissions were cut and pasted from the original speakers, or that the contemporaneous notes taken reflected the accuracy of the comments. Fee Lock, MF Sec]

Melanie Barber (President) thanked the speakers and the meeting and summed up the discussion by informing members that the main impact upon Morris dancers in general and the Morris Federation in particular would be upon the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer, and they cannot be expected to put their homes and livelihoods on the lines.

7 Election Of Committee

The committee is willing to stand again, so no vote is required as no one is standing against an incumbent. They are:

Melanie Barber, President
Fee Lock, Secretary
Jenny Everett, Treasurer
Mike Everett, Archive Officer
Jerry West, Notation Officer
Sam Ross, Newsletter Editor

She further explained co-opted committee members who had particular skills but are not formally part of the committee and have no voting rights. Currently Kevin Taylor runs the website; **John Bacon (Honorary Member)** has stood down from his position as a co-opted member to advise on the Licensing Act, although is still willing to give advice as and when needed.

8 Date of the next AGM

Saturday 23rd September 2017 in Hull (*not on 30th September as previously notified*), hosted by Beverley Garland Dancers, Green Ginger Garland, Makara Morris and Rackaback Morris, as part of Hull City of Culture.

Subsequent AGMs are on 22nd September 2018 in London, hosted by New Esperance; **Diane Moody (New Esperance)** asked if the membership would like a full weekend? All member sides to contact her, please.

2019 - we are looking for a host - we haven't been to Scotland for a while! If anyone, anywhere is interested in hosting, please get in touch.

2020 Customs & Exiles have offered to host this in and around Wokingham in Berkshire.

9 Any Other Business

Edwin Dyson (Taff Rapper) is running a re-boot of DANCING ENGLAND 30 years since it stopped. Has had support from the Morris Ring, Open Morris and the Morris Federation, and is recording thanks. He'd appreciate 'likes' on Facebook please. Take flyers!

Adam Garland of the Morris Ring is now the Chair to their Advisory Council. As immediate past Squire he has had two years of the most fun in the Morris world, attending 50 events in 2 years, and travelling 20,000 miles, with some of the events being Open Morris, and some Morris Federation. He offered his thanks to everyone in the Morris Federation for making him so welcome. **Melanie Barber (President)** thanked him for being at the vanguard of inter-Organisation co-operation, and for his geniality.

10 Presentation & Votes of Thanks

Melanie Barber (President) thanked Mortimer's Morris for organising the day & the weather! **Victoria Day (Mortimer's Morris)** received Butterworth badges on behalf of the whole side.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1729 hours.

A statement of accounts is attached.

MORRIS FEDERATION ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2015

INCOME	2015	2014
GENERAL		
Subscriptions (including extra Newsletters)	£17,376.00	£17,773.09
Newsletter adverts	£573.00	£647.00
P.R.S. Morris Ring & Open Morris	£100.98	£98.68
AFO conference accommodation refund	£0.00	£125.00
TOTAL GENERAL	£18,049.98	£18,643.77
AGM and Day of Dance		
AGM accommodation - non committee members	£60.00	£291.60
AGM room deposit and starter float	£444.50	
AGM collection	£425.09	
AGM raffle	£140.00	
TOTAL AGM and DAY of DANCE	£1,069.59	£291.60
JMO		
TOTAL JMO	£0.00	
DONATIONS & GRANTS		
Donation to research designated account	£350.00	
CD sales and donations to designated education account	£327.00	
TOTAL DONATIONS & GRANTS	£677.00	£0.00
PROMOTIONS, PUBLICATIONS & BELLS		
Sale of publications and PR goods (inc p&p)	£439.10	£148.50
Sale of bells (inc p&p)	£2,078.50	£3,542.96
TOTAL PR, PUBS & BELLS	£2,517.60	£3,691.46
BANKING		
Bank compensation for complaint	£125.00	
Refund of charges from bank in error (paid in 2014)	£28.77	
Interest on Deposit Account	£75.98	£30.89
TOTAL BANKING	£229.75	£30.89
TOTAL INCOME	£22,543.92	£22,657.72

EXPENDITURE	2015	2014
GENERAL		
Subscription refund	£25.00	
Printing and postage (newsletter, AGM notices)	£6136.61	£7,825.81
Printing (inc. renewals)	£3.30	£52.78
PRS charge	£224.40	£219.30
Stationery & postage (inc postage of goods/bells)	£840.72	£1,320.62
Phone	£2.50	£3.00
Travel expenses	£1,890.74	£1,708.35
Committee badges	£264.54	
AFO subs/conference	£249.38	£339.38
Committee meetings room hire	£165.00	£90.00
Subscription to the NUT	£10.00	
Insurance	£5,444.46	£5,158.80
Web expenses	£24.01	£33.26
H&S insurance premium	£204.00	
Archive acquisitions	£10.00	£33.50
Video conversion to DVD		£268.80
EFDSS membership	£70.00	£68.00
More Morris Better Morris (additional tickets)		£40.00
Folk Awards (tickets)		£30.00
TOTAL GENERAL	£15,564.66	£17,191.60
AGM and Day of Dance		
AGM committee accommodation (including planning meetings)	£1,282.00	£574.80
AGM rooms deposit and starter float	£444.50	£205.00
AGM guest tickets	£328.00	
AGM 40th reception	£1,096.51	
AGM collection	£425.09	
AGM badges	£55.80	£53.20
TOTAL AGM and DAY of DANCE	£3,631.90	£833.00
JMO		
JMO meeting expenses		£70.00
JMO day accommodation	£291.75	
JMO TOTAL	£291.75	£70.00
DONATIONS & GRANTS		
In Memoriam donations		£132.99
EFDSS More Morris, Better Morris grant		£500.00
SEFAN grant		£1,000.00
Grant to Ealing Morris (now Northfields Morris)	£300.00	
Roy Dommett's film disk archive	£36.89	
TOTAL DONATIONS & GRANTS	£336.89	£1,632.99
PROMOTIONS, PUBLICATIONS & BELLS		
Publications & PR printing	£61.40	£121.70
Leather badges	£189.00	
Bags	£549.46	
Purchase of bells	£3,789.19	£2,646.80
Bell refunds	£14.50	
TOTAL PR, PUBS & BELLS	£4,603.55	£2,768.50
BANKING		
Compensation payment to treasurer	£125.00	
TOTAL BANKING	£125.00	£0.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£24,553.75	£22,496.09

Reconciliation of current account balances against 2015 reported accounts	
Bank balance at 31 st Dec 2014	£21,522.15
ADJUSTMENT TO 2014 year end bank balance = add 2014 income paid in 2015 - 2015 income paid in 2014 - 2014 expense paid in 2015 + 2015 expense paid in 2014	£12,116.90
Adjusted bank balance at 31 st Dec 2014	£9,405.25
Bank balance at 31 st Dec 2015	£15,491.41
ADJUSTMENT TO 2015 year end bank balance = add 2015 income paid in 2016 - 2016 income paid in 2015 - 2015 expense paid in 2016 + 2016 expense paid in 2015	£8,167.72
Adjusted bank balance at 31 st Dec 2015	£7,323.69
Movement in bank balance over 2015	-£2,081.56
2015 operating loss, add interest paid into the deposit account reported in 2015 accounts	-£2,085.81
Discrepancy	£4.25

CASH AND BANKING DETAILS					
	31/12/2015				31/12/2014
	general account	designated education account	designated research account		
Current Account - Lloyds	£7,825.64	£327.00	£350.00	£8,502.64	
Current Account - Santander				£6,988.77	
Current Accounts Total				£15,491.41	£21,522.15
Deposit Account				£30,992.30	£30,916.32
Petty cash				£18.92	£18.92
Total				£46,503.63	£52,457.39

STOCK VALUES		
at 13/03/2016		
Stationery	£315.95	
Value of bells	£3,992.10	
Value of publications	£855.88	
Value of promotions	£708.41	
Stock held sale or return by Morris Shop	£327.25	
Outstanding amount owed by Morris Shop (Nov 2014)	£1,425.00	
Total		£7,624.59