



THE MORRIS FEDERATION

MINUTES OF THE 43rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at Cecil Sharp House, 1 Regents Park Road, London NW1 7AY from 1632 hours on Saturday 22nd September 2018 from 1632 hours

Melanie Barber (President) welcomed everyone, having declared the meeting quote with thirty-one sides attending. She welcomed Nicki Pickering, Chair of Open Morris; Norm Warren, Secretary of Open Morris; Clayton Francis, Treasurer of the Morris Ring, Steven Archer (Joint Morris Organisations Treasurer), also on behalf of the Morris Ring; and Katy Spicer, Chief Executive of the English Folk Dance & Song Society.

Fee Lock (Secretary) read out those present:

Berkshire Bedlam	Mish Mash Morris
Bishops Morris	Mockbeggar Morris
Black Diamond	New Esperance Morris
Claudentum	Nonesuch Morris
Customs & Exiles	Oyster Morris
Ditchling Morris	Persephone Women's Morris
Hammersmith Morris Men	Phoenix Morris
Hertfordshire Holly	Pigsty Morris
Hong Kong Morris (The Brackets)	Red Stags
Illustrious Order of Fools & Beasts	Rockhopper Morris
Jackstraws Morris	Strictly Clog
Kinfauns Step Dancers	Sussex Junction Morris
Leven Sword	Thrales Rapper
Mad Jack's Morris	Three's A Crowd
Maltby Sword Dancers	Windsor Morris
Milltown Cloggies	

Dr Jameson Wooders, Individual Member

Sally Wearing, Honorary Life Member

Val Parker, Honorary Life Member

Sue Swift, Honorary Life Member

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Acorn Morris
Aldbrickham Clog and Step Dancers
Ansley Morris
Beetlecrushers
Belfagan Women's Morris
Beverley Garland Dancers
Blackhorse & Standard
Bows 'n' Belles
Brighton Morris
Clogarhythm
Cricket on the Hearth
Dartmoor Border Morris
Dorset Buttons
Dorstep Clog
Dr Turberville's Morris
Fabulous Fezheads
Five Rivers Morris
Flag & Bone Gang
Flowers of Ilmington Women's Morris
Green Dragon Morris
Grenoside Sword Dancers
Hannah's Cat
Hastings Traditional Jack in the Green
Hexham Morris Men
Hips & Haws
Jerusalem Jammers
Knights of King Ina
Leeds Morris Men
Leek Morris
Mabel Gubbins
Medusa
Milkman Molly
Minden Rose
Minster Strays
Misfit Molly
Newburgh Morris
Orchard Morris Project
Phoenix Clog
Prize Old Mummers
Rose & Castle Morris
Rumburgh Morris
Ryknild Rabble
Shakespeare Morris
Shrewsbury Morris
Silkstone Green
Slubbing Billy's
Somerset Morris
Taeppas Tump
Temporary Measured
The Tattered Court
The Wild Hunt
Three Horseshoes Morris
Three Shires Clog
Wakefield Morris Dancers
Wight Bells Morris Side
William Morris
Winkleigh
Winter Warmers

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Previously circulated, taken as read. **Melanie Barber** (President) asked for a proposer as to their being correct, and requested that all speakers state their name and side prior to speaking on each occasion. **Shirley Dixon** (Jackstraws) proposed them as correct and **Diane Moody** (New Esperance) seconded the proposal. Nem con. They were signed as being a true reflection.

3 MATTERS ARISING

None.

4 OFFICERS' REPORTS

Previously circulated, taken as read. There were no queries raised.

5 MOTIONS

Melanie Barber (President) handed the Chair to **Jerry West** (Notation Officer) as she had proposed the Motion: **To introduce a flexible tenure for elected committee members.**

That from the 2019 AGM a flexible three-year tenure be introduced for committee roles.

To maintain continuity, it is proposed that the introduction of this would be staggered so that no more than one third of the committee each year would be up for election, and that the President, Secretary and Treasurer be elected/ re-elected in consecutive rather simultaneous years.

This would also require an amendment to the constitution, section 4, to read:

"The officers shall be elected to their posts at the Annual General Meeting, except in the case of a post becoming vacant before the term of office expires, when an Extraordinary General Meeting may be called to elect a replacement to complete the original term of office. Their terms of office shall run for up to three years, beginning on 1st January of the year after that in which they were elected until 31st December of the third year inclusive."

This is to encourage people to consider taking on a post with a three-year tenure, which could be renewable. **Melanie Barber** (President) said she that when was invited to stand, it was to be in post until she decides to stand down, and found a replacement or someone stood against her. With the new proposal, there is an end in sight if a candidate has doubts about the level of commitment that he or she could offer. She went on to illustrate that this makes it a three-year commitment, with an option to renew (and if circumstances are such, the incumbent could, of course, stand down beforehand). In the third year of her presidency she was chair of the Joint Morris Organisations' meeting, and this will then tie in with a renewable tenure.

Rose Crabb-White (Persephone) pointed out that this will bring us into line with a number of folk organisations such as IVFDV and RSCDS. It's quite common. **Sel Adamu** (Customs & Exiles) wanted to know how it would be brought in. **Jerry West** (Notation Officer, acting Chair) explained that Melanie will stand in 2019 down plus one other; the year after that the secretary and one other; the year after that the treasurer and one other. This will offer an opportunity for others to stand. Melanie Barber clarified that she herself is standing down and the holder of the other post would be up for re-election, and he/she may not necessarily be standing down.

Diane Moody (New Esperance) wanted clarification on any non-elected committee members, and whether this would apply to them, and **Melanie Barber** (President) explained that co-opted members are only on the committee for a year (with the option for renewal), and for a specific purpose. We review this annually at our committee meetings when we review the committee structure. **Anne Salway Luxford** (New Esperance) asked if someone were stand down within the three years, when does their tenure start? **Melanie Barber** (President) said that this would be pro rata, along with someone standing down within the year.

Jerry West (Notation Officer, acting Chair) explained that we are trying to walk the tightrope between people having to stand down, and encouraging new people to want to stand. **Joseph Philips** (Nonesuch Morris) asked how we would deal with a challenge halfway through a term? Would this still be pro rata? **Melanie Barber** (President) said that constitutionally speaking, anyone can stand against an incumbent at any time. **Val Parker** (Honorary Member) said that this is analogous with existing constitution.

Diane Moody (New Esperance) said that presumably there would be a timetable to give people time to consider whether they want to stand? **Melanie Barber** (President) said that we would announce this at each AGM.

Jerry West (Notation Officer, acting Chair) moved the discussion to a vote, and asked Nicki Pickering of Open Morris and Steven Archer of the Joint Morris Organisations to act as tellers. The votes were as follows:

916.5 in favour (443.5 postal, 273 present)
1 against (1 postal)
31 abstentions (20 abstentions postal, 11 abstentions present)

The Motion was carried. **Melanie Barber** (President) re-took the Chair.

7 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE

Melanie Barber (President) suggested the committee be voted upon *en bloc* if no one objected, and none was recorded. She asked Nicki Pickering of Open Morris & Clayton Francis of the Morris Ring to act as tellers. **Peter Sheil** (Red Stags) proposed the committee be returned, and **Sel Adamu** (Customs & Exiles) seconded it. The votes were as follows:

244 in favour
0 against
0 abstentions.

The committee was re-elected. Mike Adamson, who is a member of a number of sides including Strictly Clog, remains a co-opted committee member to assist with the new membership database and GDPR. This is not an elected post.

8 DATES OF THE NEXT AGMs

Saturday 28th September 2019 in Perth, guests of Kinfauns. We will pay expenses for nominees to that!
Saturday 26th September 2020 in Reading, guests of Customs & Exiles in Reading

2021 – we need a volunteer! We try to move around the country. Please contact Melanie Barber or Fee Lock if you are interested.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Morris Dance Database

Colin Andrews of Winkleigh Morris is capturing information of teams and repertoires. This is supported by the Morris Ring & Open Morris. He had tabled some information forms for those sides that aren't already on it; there is also one on the website. **Diane Moody** (New Esperance) wanted to know the difference between this and SideFinder; **Melanie Barber** (President) explained that this eventually will be joint with the Morris Ring and Open Morris, and **Sam Ross** (Newsletter Editor) said that this would enable sides to add information themselves, as well as provide an archive of teams no longer dancing.

(b) Fools & Beasts Unconvention

Robert Chisholm (The Illustrious Order of Fools & Beasts) reminded the meeting that the Unconvention still had some places left, and those interested should contact him directly.

10 PRESENTATIONS AND VOTES OF THANKS

(a) EFDSS Gold Badge Award

Katy Spicer, Chief Executive of the English Folk Dance & Song Society, took the microphone, and announced that the presentation of an EFDSS Gold Badge was awarded to those who had made an outstanding contribution to the EFDSS and or the wider folk sector, and that **John Bacon** (Ditchling Morris) and former President of the Morris Federation was to be a recipient today.

Barry Goodman, former President of the Morris Federation had written the citation with assistance from several contributors, recognising John's wide-ranging interests and support of the folk arts. **Melanie Barber** (President) read it out, which is reproduced here, with thanks:

John Bacon – EFDSS Gold Badge Citation

John's involvement with the world of folk started in 1981, on foreign shores, as a member of "The Amazing Headbangers Morris Men of Cyprus". Although he also became a member of Brighton Morris from 1983 to 1988, he spent most of his working life as a Chartered Engineer abroad and, landing in Hong Kong, soon became involved with Hong Kong Morris, of which he is still a member of the UK section. He is proud that when the team visited Sidmouth Folk Week in 2017 it included

local Chinese dancers as well as ex-patriots.

On their return from Cyprus, John and his wife, Ann, settled in Ditchling, East Sussex, where they were the driving force behind the founding of Ditchling Morris, a mixed family side dancing Cotswold Morris, of which John has been Squire, Foreman and Bagman over the years. As well as running workshops at Chippenham, Sidmouth and Broadstairs Festivals, John was keen to encourage young dancers in the Ditchling side to strive for excellence by introducing them to the John Gasson Jig Competition, held each year at Sidmouth. Together with Ann he coached and provided music for young members of the side with great success, resulting in Hattie Vail's winning solo jig in 2000, accompanied by John as musician, and Jack Worth winning in 2010. Jack says:

"John encouraged me to enter the Jig Competition after less than 18 months of dancing. He was very generous with his time as a coach to prepare for entering, and the advice he gave me on dance style and choreography still influences my dancing now. Most of all he taught me to respect the audience: Morris is street entertainment and performance, not about the dancers themselves."

Morris is certainly street entertainment, and the Government's proposals for the 2003 Licensing Act threatened to prevent Morris dancers from performing outside pubs, which would have had a serious effect not only on the Morris, but also on the extent to which British people would be exposed to an important part of their own traditional culture. John had been elected as the first male President of the Morris Federation (formerly the Women's Morris Federation), and one of his most outstanding achievements was to work with the Morris Ring, Open Morris and EFDSS in lobbying to make the views of the folk community known to central and local government. This included meeting with Kim Howells, then Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and working with Lord Redesdale to table an amendment to the Bill, which resulted in Morris dancing being exempted from the licensing provision.

John's other great achievement as President of the Morris Federation was the formation of the Joint Morris Organisation, which was a result of the close relationship between the three organisations during the campaign over the licensing laws. The JMO continues to exist, meeting together to discuss matters of mutual interest, maintaining insurance cover over the three organisations and presenting a National Day of Dance each year to showcase Morris dancing in different parts of the country. This annual event stems from the Morris dancing day held in Trafalgar Square in November 2003 to recognise the exemption. John took on the role of co-ordinating the Day of Dance with Westminster City Council and the Morris organisations, ensuring that the dancing reflected the breadth of English traditional dance and providing a template that is still in use today.

John was co-opted to the National Council of the EFDSS in 2000 and formally elected in 2001. He served as a Trustee/Director until 2005, becoming Vice Chair of the Council. John had been recruited to widen the Council's scope and experience, as at the time he was also the President of the Morris Federation. Characteristically he did not limit his interests to dance but used his skills and talents to further all the work of the EFDSS, taking a special professional interest in the structural condition and maintenance of the EFDSS headquarters, Cecil Sharp House.

A key concern when John joined the Council was the provision of disabled access to meet the requirements of the forthcoming disability discrimination legislation. Because of the building's listed status the problems were considerable, but the ground floor meeting rooms and the all-important Vaughan Williams Memorial Library were made accessible via an external stair lift and disabled toilets were also provided.

Not only did John take responsibility for the development of plans to secure this disabled access but he also arranged the necessary planning permission and listed building consent, supervised the work himself to minimise the costs to the Society and undertook all the fund raising. More than a dozen applications were written and followed up; most did not succeed but this did not deter John, who finally secured over £30,000 worth of funding for the project.

As Trustee/Director of EFDSS with a particular interest in dance John was actively involved in the "Morris Futures" project to produce film material to promote the Morris, especially to young people, using finance and resources within the Morris organisations and EFDSS. He took the lead in this project while on the EFDSS Council.

John was also directly responsible for the EFDSS involvement in two European Communities' dance

projects. The first of these was the WebDance project, completed in January 2005, which involved working with the University of Hertfordshire, universities in Cyprus, Lithuania and Switzerland and IT companies to provide web-based facilities to exchange information about traditional dance using 3-D moving images of a solo Morris dancer.

The subsequent OpenDance project built on this and applied the technology to teaching traditional dance using 3-D images of a Morris dance and an English social dance. Simple lesson plans were developed and could be explored via the Internet. It is due to John's work that both projects created a wider European exposure for EFDSS as well as enabling young people to use information technology in new and exciting ways.

Living in Sussex, John was keen to develop folk activities in the local area and attended the first Folk Arts Network meeting at the South East Arts offices in Royal Tunbridge Wells in 2000, as a result of which the South East Folk Arts Network (SEFAN) was created. SEFAN evolved to become a funded, independent organisation in 2004. John attended the meetings from the early days and officially joined the board in July 2005. He remained an active member of the Board of Directors until SEFAN's closure in 2015, whereupon he joined the committee of The Stepback Consortium, which continues the three funded projects within SEFAN, namely Meltdown Ceilidhs, Stepback Higher Education and the East Sussex Schools Dance Festival.

During post-meeting networking after the first SEFAN meeting, John was one of a group that decided to investigate setting up a new English Ceilidh series in Sussex. Meltdown English Ceilidhs held the first three pilot dances in Haywards Heath in Autumn 2001 and still continues to run five or six dances each year in the winter months. John has been part of the Meltdown Committee from the start and, according to fellow-organiser Fee Lock, has kept the idea of "best band, best caller, best time" steadily on track. Fee adds that... *"John never hesitates to make sure that anyone looking a little unsure of themselves knows that it's perfectly acceptable to come along unaccompanied and make new dancing partners. Sometimes he will do this by asking people to dance; sometimes simply by starting the dancing off with Ann"*

Another SEFAN project that John has been very closely associated with is the East Sussex Schools Dance Festival. Indeed, the project was instigated by John, who did the fund-raising, found the tutors and brought the local schools on board to learn a variety of dance styles, which they perform at a much-anticipated, joyful gathering each year. Themes have included "Hobby Horses", "Green Men", "Well Dressing" ... and "Folk Song", in which EFDSS President and SEFAN Patron Shirley Collins was involved, choosing and teaching some of the songs. The children are given opportunities to perform at events beyond the Festival, including dancing out with Ditchling Morris. Shirley had this to say about the Festival and John's part in it:

"With nine schools taking part it's truly one of the most cheering (and sometimes moving) sights - so many children enjoying dancing the Morris in a huge marquee at Plumpton Race Course. And the children are really involved, except perhaps when their attention wanders to see if Mum and Dad are in the audience!

Watching this, in John's benign and smiling presence, is a truly heart-warming experience, and you know that Morris dancing is in safe and caring hands. I feel very proud to know John and Ann and proud of them, too."

The EFDSS Gold Badge is awarded to those who have made unique or outstanding contributions to the art or science of folk dance, music or song, or have given exceptional support in furthering the aims of the Society. John has clearly met all of these criteria in his tireless involvement in, and promotion of, so many aspects of folk music and dance, his vision and expertise in the transformation of Cecil Sharp House and his enthusiasm for the education of young people in the folk arts. There can be no doubt that the award of this Gold Badge to John Bacon is long overdue and thoroughly deserved.

Barry Goodman

Barry Goodman is a past President of the Morris Federation and sometime Chair of Bedfordshire District of the EFDSS. He is a singer, musician, caller and folk arts educator and a long-time member of Redbornstoke Morris.

Katy Spicer (EFDSS) presented the Gold Badge to a huge round of applause.

John Bacon (Ditchling Morris) accepted the badge with utter disbelief and amazement. He said that he had been fortunate to have been able to take early retirement from his day job as an engineer and to focus on his hobbies. During his career he had always tried to mentor young engineers and help them develop their careers, and expressed his heartfelt thanks to all of those who had contributed to these projects.

(b) New Esperance – AGM hosts

Melanie Barber (President) thanked New Esperance Morris for hosting a wonderful day, despite the weather, with resourcefulness (dancing under umbrellas), in pubs by moving furniture about, etc. There had been a ceilidh the night before, there would be another this evening, and a workshop tomorrow morning followed by a local stand for those still in London. **Diane Moody** (New Esperance) received Butterworth Badges on behalf of the team, to another round of well-earned applause.

(c) Kevin Taylor

Kevin Taylor, our long-standing web master, who had been co-opted for many years, was – with his agreement – being unco-opted. **Fee Lock** (Secretary) had organised a Butterworth Badge for him, too, which will be sent to him directly as he was not at the meeting today. He also received a round of applause for his considerable contribution.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 1730 hours.