

FedExtra

Autumn / Winter 2023



Cover image by:
Dorset Morri'arty Photography

A Hearty and Wholesome Hello!



The warmest welcome to your latest issue of the FedExtra online magazine! For those that don't already know, I'm Jess Searle, current Membership Communications Officer for the Morris Federation, pictured here with a sunflower on my head alongside Eliza Russell, who I'm excited to introduce as my successor as of January. She's already been doing a fabulous job, stepping up to take on parts of the role following her nomination at the AGM in September, and has very kindly volunteered to assist in editing this edition.

I've had lots of fun gathering articles (with heartfelt thanks to all contributors), which will now be passed on to Eliza for a second proof and formatting, a process that will act as our formal handover.

Despite it being the right decision, I must admit that I'm sad to be stepping down from the Committee. Not only has it been an absolute honour to have helped support the JMD regional days of dance this summer, I've also had the pleasure of getting to know some of the finest and most passionate Morris fellows and fanatics through the various aspects of my role.

It's been a hugely significant summer for me – very much a rollercoaster, but one that will be remembered in the best possible way with thanks to the support of such wonderful friends. If you'd have told me at the beginning of the year that I was going to have the opportunity to play for Jen Cox (Chair of Open Morris), Fee Lock (Secretary of the JMD), Nigel Strudwick (Squire of the Morris Ring)

and Peter Austin (Bagman of the Morris Ring) at various occasions throughout the year, as well as Emma Laister at the John Gasson Jig competition, I'd have burst out laughing and said "Don't be ridiculous – I'll just be wandering around with a sunflower on my head, or dressed as a penguin or a parrot, or something."

I've done the latter with merry abandon, too, and even got to meet a parrot while dressed as a parrot, but in all seriousness, the opportunities I've had this year have provided me with possibly the most wonderful and surreal confidence-building journey I've ever had the honour to embark on.



Right – enough babbling from me!

Without further ado, on with the rest of the FedExtra, and a stick for Eliza to catch and caper away with!

Launches stick

-Jess-

-----What's Inside?-----

Page 2 - Editorial

Page 3 - President's Prologue

Page 4 - Your new Committee members revealed

Page 5 - Committee contacts

Page 6 - Official Fed AGM 2023 Write-up

- Morris Magic for Old Meg and Leek Morris

Page 8 - Commemorative Badges presentations

Page 9 - What's on? Your guide to upcoming events

- Grappling With Tradition; The latest on the Songs Survey and EDI by Fee Lock

Page 10 - Beggars' Oak Clog celebrate their 40th Anniversary

- Hertfordshire Holly and Fiddler's Brook join forces

Page 11 - "How Morris Dancing saved me from the Secret police"

Page 12 - The First Annual Driffield Day of Dance

- England's Glory Ladies Morris celebrate 50 years of dancing

Page 13 - Ellington Morris celebrate 50th Anniversary

Page 14 - 'Platinum Capers' for East Kent Morris

- Top IT Tips from Brian Kelly

Page 16 - The Turning In Song

- See You in the Spring! Editorial

President's Prologue

Pauline Woods-Wilson, President of the Morris Federation



Wow, what a summer! This edition of the FedExtra shows just what a marvellous time we all had this summer. We are keeping all the write-ups about the JMO Days of Dance for a separate special edition, which will be launching in early 2024.

At our AGM weekend, magnificently hosted by Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish and the Shropshire Bedlams, we elected a new Treasurer, Abbi Stephens (Wild Moon Morris) who will take over from Jenny Everett in January, and a new Membership Communications Officer, Eliza Russell (Worthing Larks), who will take over from Jess Searle. We are still looking for an Archive Officer to take over from Mike Everett, and, in the meantime, we will start an Archive Group of interested people. We presented Jenny Everett, Mike Everett and Jess Searle with their past Officers' badges, and will be very sorry to see them go, although I have suspicions that they will still be involved, for example Jenny with the Arts Council project.

Nominated by members, we were proud to award Honorary Life Membership to four worthy recipients. To Beth Neill for 30 years of the Morris Matters magazine, Fee Lock for 22 years as MF Secretary, Frank Lee for making thousands of affordable rapper swords, and Michael Stimpson for over 20 years of cost savings on combining the Insurances of the 3 Morris organisations. Photos and more about them will be in the next edition of the FedExtra.

Looking back, it has been a phenomenally busy year with all of our volunteers taking on extra work - our first grant from Arts Council England for primary school teaching initially involving the creation of exciting new videos (Esther Ferry-Kennington, Sally Smith, and Jenny Everett); new Safeguarding guidance (Andrew), and all the guidance in the Members Manual publicly available on the web (me); the return of

the FedExtra for reading online (Jess); 'Morris Matters' magazine and recorded videos of our zoom talks all searchable on the web site (Brian); launch of the 'Rattle Up my Boys' Longsword magazine archive online (Brian); two new research publications; more social media posts (Abigail) including Throwback Thursdays and Tribute Tuesdays archive photos (Mike); the start of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) panel of the JMO (Fee, Pauline, Roary Neat); and the six extra JMO regional events for the 20th anniversary. Not to mention a completely revised Constitution (Jerry), a new secure Voting system (Dan), and ten online events (me). And all this is on top of the 'run-of-the-mill' work that the Officers do. No wonder we are all exhausted!

We can see more EDI work coming up in the future, so we welcome new co-optees Roary Neat (Dancing Spires) and Luke Williams (The Wild Hunt, and Brixton Tatterjacks).

Looking forward to next year, Jenny & Mike Everett (Trentside Holmes) will be hosting the JMO DoD in Newark on Saturday 13th April, and Cardiff Morris are hosting our DoD and AGM on Sat 21st September.

Do please say "hello" to your committee when we are out and about and give us your feedback, or, better still, volunteer to get involved! Until then, enjoy your FedExtra.

-Pauline-



Welcoming our new Committee Members...

Abbi Stephens (she/her) - Treasurer (from 1st January 2024)

Contact: treasurer@morrised.org.uk



Hi, I'm Abbi, the new Morris Federation Treasurer. My journey into Morris started just over a year ago, when I joined my local border side in Glastonbury. Quickly realising that wasn't enough, I then joined Enigma Border Morris, and have had a brilliant first season with

them!

Since then, I have also helped to set up a brand new side, Wild Moon Morris, and finally topped it off by recently joining Otter Morris! When I was told that Morris was addictive, I think I underestimated how much!

I'm really looking forward to working with the lovely Federation Committee and being part of the Morris community as a whole.

Eliza Russell (she/her) - Membership Communications Officer (from 1st January 2024)

Contact: member-comms@morrised.org.uk



Hey! I'm Eliza, your brand-new Member Communications Officer! I grew up with Morris dancing and have been involved with various forms of Morris for 26 years of my life. I am currently Squire of Worthing Larks, and alongside dancing and

playing melodeon as much as I can, I run our website, Facebook and Twitter pages, and have also had several blogs over the years on different subjects. I often joke that I was raised in the country pubs of Sussex, having been involved with Morris since the age of 3, am a passionate Cotswold dancer, love jigs, and can be found performing further - afield with Knights of King Ina when I am not Larking locally! I

have a BTEC in Art and Design, am always creating something, and am very keen to channel my creativity into FedExtra, having been a fan of the publication for a fair number of years. I am hugely enthusiastic, and super excited to have the opportunity to give back to the Morris community by putting my love of everything Morris to good use by taking on this role and supporting the Federation Committee.

Lin Steel (she/her) - Keeper of the Bells

Contact: bells@morrised.org.uk



Hi, I'm Lin, the new Keeper of the Bells. My Morris journey started a long time ago when I joined OJB Border Morris in Bracknell. When I moved to Somerset, I joined Dr Turbervilles Morris, and it's just

grown from there with the setting up of Enigma Border Morris. I now dance in 5 sides regularly, and pop in & out of a couple of others. It really is an addictive, amazing hobby!

Roary Neat (they/them) - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Co-optee

Hello, I'm Roary, and I have always been passionate about championing inclusivity in the folk world. As a founding member of Dancing Spires, an Oxford rapper side which is specifically and unapologetically queer - inclusive (our kit is all rainbow!), I have had experience writing constitutions and safeguarding documents and ensuring that these are adhered to. I sit on the Joint Morris Organisations' Equality, Diversity and Inclusion panel and am excited now to be part of the Morris Federation Committee. In other parts of the folk scene, I am a singer-



songwriter who takes pride (as an Autistic and non-binary queer person myself) in altering traditional folk songs and writing new ones which explore the narratives of minority groups often ignored by mainstream media.

My part-time day job is as a tutor on the EFDSS' Inclusive Folk programme, which brings folk music and dance to young people with special educational needs.

Luke Williams (he/him) – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Co-optee



Hi folks! I'm Luke, working on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) alongside Roary. I first dipped a toe into the Morris world two years ago as part of some friendly teasing of a friend who danced Cotswold, and having discovered border I haven't looked back. At my peak I danced with six sides in three months, though

these days I spend my time predominantly with The Wild Hunt and Brixton Tatterjacks.

I'm excited to be part of the team, and to work to continue the Morris traditions in a way that is inclusive of all and reflective of modern society. Please feel free to get in touch and say hello!

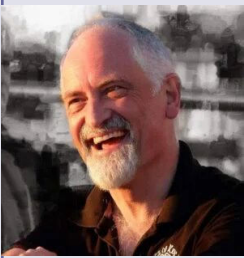
You can contact either Roary or Luke on edi@morrisfed.org.uk

And the not-so-new ones...



President

Pauline Woods-Wilson (she/her)
Contact for publicity and events enquiries.
president@morrisfed.org.uk



Secretary

Andrew Knight (he/him)
Contact for general enquiries and membership advice
secretary@morrisfed.org.uk



Treasurer (until 31st December 2023)

Jenny Everett (she/her)
Contact for membership applications and insurance
treasurer@morrisfed.org.uk
Jenny@morrisfed.org.uk (from 1st Jan 2024)



Archive Officer

Mike Everett (he/him)
Contact for archives and lending library
archive@morrisfed.org.uk



Notation Officer

Jerry West (he/him)
Contact for dance notations
notation@morrisfed.org.uk



Membership Communications Officer (until 31st December 2023)

Jess Searle (she/her)
Contact for newsletter contributions, advertising, membership broadcast emails and news
member-comms@morrisfed.org.uk

Co-Opted Committee...



JMO Secretary

Fee Lock (she/her)
jmo-secretary@morrisfed.org.uk



IT Administrator

Dan Watford (he/him)
admin@morrisfed.org.uk



IT Advice and Support

Brian Kelly (he/him)
comms-it@morrisfed.org.uk

Advisors...



Health and Safety Advisor

Sally Wearing (she/her)
sallywearing@outlook.com

The Morris Federation AGM 2023 - The Official Write - Up

Written by Poppy Horrocks - Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish

A massive thank you from us, the Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish, to the Morris Federation for the opportunity to host the Morris Federation AGM weekend of dance 2023.

We are two Border Morris sides, who always perform together, based in rural South West Shropshire, centred around the small market town of Bishop's Castle. Combined, we have over 65 members.



We were fortunate enough to have 24 teams (over 350 people!) join us for our weekend of dance and music, many of whom we were lucky enough to see for the first time. It was a fantastic showcase of the variety of dancing styles from across the UK and it was truly a spectacle to behold for the residents.

We kicked off the weekend on Friday night with a music and song



session at the oldest licensed brewery in the UK, the Three Tuns in Bishop's Castle. Then on Saturday, we split the dancing between Bishop's Castle

and the historic town of Ludlow. Teams danced at spots throughout the towns, showing off their originality and enthusiasm for Morris dancing despite the odd rain shower.

For the evening festivities, it was only fitting that the team's founder, John Kirkpatrick, along with his 4 sons, played the ceilidh with their band Kirkophony. The nicest bit of feedback we heard was "The ceilidh was a blast, though I was a bit disappointed that each dance was over so quickly", which really sums up the evening and fun had by all.

On Sunday, it was a bit soggy, but the brave few processed up the steep hill in Bishop's Castle, from the Six Bells to the Three Tuns, where we retreated to the top room of the pub for shelter and more dancing until it was time to say goodbye.



Over the course of the weekend, we had teams and stewards collecting money for Cancer Research UK, we're proud to say a sum of £384.49 was made and donated to this worthy cause.

Finally, on behalf of the Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish, a big thank you to all the stewards and team members who helped over the weekend, but most of all to the visiting sides. We look forward to dancing with you all soon!



A Little Bit of Bad Luck Can Lead to a Great Bit of MORRIS MAGIC

Written by Suzanne and Anne - Old Meg Morris

What happens when your side is all geared up to attend a great Morris event and sadly some of your key musicians/dancers become incapacitated at the last minute?

Do you:

- a) give in and cancel?
- b) wallow in beer and self-pity?
- c) go anyway and see what turns up?

Well, this dilemma is exactly what Old Meg Morris and Leek Morris

were faced with for the Morris Federation Day of Dance (hosted by Shropshire Bedlams & Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish) on 30th September 2023. Happily, both sides chose option 'c', and as luck (or Morris Magic) would have it, were first scheduled to perform together at the Castle Hotel at the top of the hill in Bishops Castle.

So what is this magic we're referring to?

Old Meg were without their lead musicians.

Leek were without their dancers.

We're sure you can guess the rest...

We had the most marvellously social and fun day working together:

Old Meg accompanists were sharing tunes hurriedly with Leek Morris, who were only too willing to give them a go and thus enabling us to dance. This



was despite Leek coming from the completely different tradition of Cotswold Morris and being asked to play for a North-West side! Domesday Morris were also at this first dance spot and magically had an excellent melodeon player too, who was equally happy to join in: we had successfully completed our first set.

Not only that – once our plight had been more widely noticed, there was no end of offers (or maybe we were begging) from other musicians to help out. At our second dance spot, we were also joined



by two wonderful musicians from Shropshire Bedlams. By this time the skies had opened but with such a band, nothing could dampen

our enthusiasm. For our third dance spot, we recruited two excellent melodeon players from Stroud Morris and we had another most enjoyable set.

So this magical article is really a huge thank you to all the sides we were privileged to perform with. Thank you, musicians and dancers,

from Leek Morris, Shropshire Bedlams, Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish, Domesday Morris, Stroud Morris, Glorishears of Brummagem and Bow Brook Border Morris, for helping us to have a jolly old time in Bishop's Castle. (Fingers Crossed we haven't missed anybody out – but if we have THANK YOU, too.)

Commiserations of course to all those who'd been unable to attend from both sides: hope all are now recovered and looking forward to a future opportunity to perform with the magical Morris community.



All in all, we had a fantastic day supported by brilliant musicians. The warmth and sociability of the Morris community, and the willingness of the musicians to help out fellow dancers, has made a big impression on us and we were left with some happy and abiding memories of the event. A final thanks to Shropshire Bedlams and Martha Rhoden's for hosting this wonderful weekend.

"A Noteworthy First!"



Dorset Morriarty Photography

One last, but very important, detail we feel is far too good to leave out was the solo jig performance on Sunday by Peter Austin, Morris Ring Bagman, and the first Morris Ring invited guest to dance a jig at a Morris Federation AGM, who performed with musician Jess Searle, Morris Federation Membership Communications Officer. When asked what she thought, Pauline Woods-Wilson, President of the Morris Federation said it was a "Noteworthy First!". I am sure we all agree!



COMMEMERATIVE BADGES PRESENTATIONS

By Pauline Woods-Wilson, President of the Morris Federation

To commemorate their service to the Morris Federation, we presented the volunteers below with bespoke Badges as a token thank you for their hard work over many years. The beautiful badges include their name, title and dates of service.



Jenny Everett

Treasurer for 17 years, from 2007 to 2023 (in addition to her 4 years as Events Officer, 1986-1989)



During her 21 years Jenny has seen a lot of changes in the Morris Federation, including the transition to online banking - the renewals all used to be done by hand in the days when everyone used cheques! She created and ran the MF 'shop', managing all the stock, taking orders by various

mediums, and posting everything off. She is known for her timely, pragmatic and sensible advice on many contentious (and not so contentious!) issues that the committee has faced during her time. She will be sorely missed.

Mike Everett

Archive Officer for 20 years, from 2004 to 2003



During his time on the committee, Mike has been hugely enthusiastic and dedicated to discovering archive material, arranged for a photographic record to be made of all MF AGM days of dance, and created new material to celebrate anniversaries and other events. He is known for his willingness to address

difficult issues on behalf of the committee, and the archive photos posted on social media for Throwback Thursdays and Tribute Tuesdays to educate and engage the membership will be sorely missed.

Jess Searle

Membership Communications Officer for 1 year, 2023



Due to unexpected issues with fatigue, Jess has had to step down from her committee role after one year. During this time, she has been a bundle of enthusiasm and technical know-how, relaunched the FedExtra as a digital publication, designed a couple of versions of our Christmas card, and stewarded at several of

the JMO regional events. Thankfully, she'll still be lurking around to help in the background wherever possible and is looking forward to being co-opted somewhere in some capacity in the future.

Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish and Shropshire Bedlams



We also presented badges to our wonderful AGM hosts, Martha Rhoden's Tuppenny Dish and Shropshire Bedlams, for a full-on weekend of fun, with particular thanks to Poppy Horrocks for doing the majority of the organising for this event.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Online Talks and Workshops

We have the following events coming up in the new year:

- * Book a place on: [Workshop - "Safeguarding, an Introduction."](#) hosted by [Andrea Richards](#), Sunday 7th January, 17:00-18:30. An important event for teams who have under 18s or vulnerable adults, or are thinking of setting up a youth team. A whistle stop tour of all things safeguarding for both children and vulnerable adults in a Morris setting.
- * Quiz - 'No Such Thing as Folk' - a panel show hosted by Stephen Rowley, Sunday 3rd March afternoon (save the date)
- * Talk - Maypoles by Judith Proctor, Sunday 24th March afternoon (save the date)

MF AGM and JMO Days of Dance 2024

- * Book a place on: [Sat 13th April 2024 - JMO Day of Dance in Newark-on-Trent, Nottinghamshire](#) - hosted by Trentside Holmes and friends.
- * Register your interest for: [Sat 21st September 2024 - MF Day of Dance and AGM in Cardiff](#) - hosted by Cardiff Morris.

Grappling With Tradition

Written by Fee Lock - JMO Secretary

As part of the continuing best practice working of the three Morris Organisations, we thought it would be sensible to form a group looking at Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI): principally to look at removing barriers to recruitment, particularly for people who wouldn't necessarily have thought that Morris dancing was for them. Open Morris has So Xsighted Morris, a group of visually impaired and blind members; there are also some sides who have wheelchair-using dancers. So we were keen to look at other aspects where we could help our members feel confident at spreading the recruitment nets wider.

What arrived, however, was a query as to whether Morris songs (usually sung at the beginning of dances or in the pub afterwards) are still relevant and acceptable for today's audiences – specifically the first verse of the song *Lads a' Bunchum* from Adderbury, "*Oh, dear mother what a fool I've been*", a song I've sung without really thinking for many years. As is usual with simple-sounding questions, it's the beginning of an extensive re-examination of what we do when, where, how, why and latterly, whether!

We put out a survey that went to all members of the three Organisations, asking what people sang (if anything); whether they'd changed any words, or only sang at specific times, e.g. outside pubs in the evenings, etc.

The results were a truly interesting snapshot of how our memberships see themselves in their communities, and we had collected so much information that we thought we should share this somehow.

The EFDSS conference on *Grappling With Tradition* was announced for the weekend of the EFDSS AGM, so we leapt into action with a thirty-minute paper, written and presented principally by Liz Scholey, Treasurer of Open Morris, who was previously the head of HR in a university and is an independent dance teacher. Other members of our happy brood were Jen Cox, Chair of Open Morris, who sits on the EDI panel and is the new Dance Development Manager of EFDSS; Matthew Turvey, the West Midlands area representative of the Morris Ring and a schoolteacher; and Roary Neat, member of the EFDSS Inclusive Folk Team and MF co-optee.

Collectively, we were in charge of giving a breakdown of the quotations from members in relation to their songs, or why they didn't sing. We marched on in rapper formation with a stamp on the right foot on 'eight' ("Five, six, seven, eight!", if like me you've never actually Rapped), and I'd rapidly learnt how to sign my name in BSL. Jen Cox brought the tuning flute, and I was quite impressed at how stentorian we sounded as we bellowed across Kennedy Hall to a rather stunned Sunday morning conference!

The full text of the piece is being published in *EDS*, the EFDSS' magazine by arrangement, so you'll have to read it there later in the year or wait until we can reproduce it here. What I can tell you is how proud I am of the work we have all done to look at our dancing and how we dance in our own communities. I'm not in the business of telling people what they should or shouldn't do, and everyone will have their own view on balancing tradition, practice, consideration of the views of others, an expectation of viewing a performance in the round, and maintaining side cohesion. As our first full year post-Covid & lockdown restrictions, it's been a good time to review and renew what we do, and I'm grateful that one of our own members trusted us to look into this subject carefully and without favour.

-Fee-



Beggars' Oak Clog Celebrate 40th Anniversary

Written by Linda Watterson - Secretary of Beggars' Oak Clog

It is always exciting when a new dance is created in celebration of an important event. So, it was with a good deal of excitement and anticipation that Beggars' Oak Clog danced 'Ruby Jubilee' for first time at their 40th 'Ruby' anniversary celebrations in Armitage, Staffordshire on 7th October 2023. During a very happy evening the team was joined by local Morris, Border and Clog teams, friends old and new, all sharing reminiscences and future plans.

Beggars' Oak Clog was formed in October 1983 through a meeting of its original founders: Christina and Peter Wallis, Gilly and Tony Edwards, Ruth Cole, and Elizabeth (Liz) Appleby.



Named after a famous Staffordshire tree, the team follows the North-West Morris tradition from Lancashire and Cheshire. It was described by a local newspaper in 1984 as dancing on reinforced

wooden soles and ... clattering away happily on Monday nights ... in Armitage'. They performed "Runcorn" at their first dance out at Stowe House, Lichfield, on the July 7th, 1984. The team grew rapidly and made an impact locally and further afield.

Beggars' Oak Clog made history in 1986 by becoming the first female dancers to be invited to perform in Abbots Bromley village on Wakes Monday, Horn Dance Day. Traditionally, Horn Dance Day in Abbots Bromley had been an all-male event. "It is a tremendous honour," said Gill Edwards, one

of the dancers at the time. The Beggar's Oak dancers, wearing their distinctive bright green costumes, entertained the crowds in the



centre of the village while the Horn Dancers made one of their last calls at the other end of the village. The dancers and their musicians have continued to perform there ever since.

In June 1989, the team were spotted at the Lichfield Folk Festival and invited to perform live on BBC's 'Take a Break' TV programme with John Craven and Diane Kemp. They spent seven hours at the studios and achieved their 3 minutes of fame on screen. The team went 'Stateside' at Easter in 1999 to dance in Stafford County, Virginia, USA. Hosted by a local Appalachian Clog team they visited Washington D.C., The White House, went for a drive along the Shenandoah Valley and visited the Luray Caves. One team member summed it up: "We danced and partied, were feted and very spoiled!"

Forty years of dancing and music have included performing at the NEC and the National Memorial Arboretum, Well Dressings, Village fetes, Christmas Fayres, Weddings, Folk Festivals, Days of Dance and Wassailing. They have danced with robots, sailors, dignitaries, and enthusiastic members of the public. All the history, joy and teamwork that make up a successful dance team were evident as the steps of Ruby Jubilee 'clattered' in Armitage to warm applause. The team still practice on Mondays in Armitage Village Hall. Always ready to welcome new dancers and musicians, they look forward to taking their dances near and far for many years to come.



Hertfordshire Holly and Fiddler's Brook

Written by Janice Dickson (Foreman, Hertfordshire Holly) and Gaynor Tansley (Foreman, Fiddler's Brook)

Times can be tough for Morris sides as numbers dwindle and recruiting drives fail to bring in new members. One solution is to merge with another team. Here is our experience of doing this:

Hertfordshire Holly's Story

In November 2022 things looked bleak for Hertfordshire Holly, a mixed Northwest side from East Hertfordshire. Dwindling numbers and multiple injuries made it impossible to dance out and there was little impetus to practice as a result. An unexpected phone-call from Gaynor Tansley of Fiddler's Brook changed all that. Similarly faced with a recruitment crisis, she and her team had decided that their best option for survival was to merge with another team and that lucky team was us! Honestly, it felt like the cavalry had arrived!

It was not all plain sailing, however. Identity is very important to a team and a lot of compromises had to be made to fit the two teams together. The biggest sticking point for us, for example, were our team colours - totally different from Fiddler's Brook! We were delighted therefore when they took a fancy to our men's kit and said they were happy to wear that. All the compromises were worth it when the joined-up team danced together at Rochester Sweeps this year.

Fiddler's Brook's Story

When practice numbers dwindled for Fiddler's Brook Morris the decision was made to look for a mixed North West and/or Border side with suitable practices (day and location). The best option was Hertfordshire Holly so we contacted them, though sadly one of our dancers could not make their practices and another decided to retire.

Hertfordshire Holly were very welcoming but there were ups and downs along the way and compromises had to be reached. Dances we thought we both knew proved to be unrecognisably different. Garland dances didn't appeal to our dancers and Hertfordshire Holly weren't sure about Border dances. We used the same music for different dances. Our kits were very different!

We made a core North West repertoire using mostly Hertfordshire Holly dances, with one of ours to complement, and then each side had a few extra they could dance. Garland and Border dances were made optional. The whole group together decided the best alternative music for one core dance, and music composed by one of the Hertfordshire Holly musicians was perfect for one of our other dances. We agreed to use Hertfordshire Holly's kit for the first season, but dancers could choose to wear the skirt or trouser version.



We have learned from this experience. There needs to be real commitment by all members of both sides to make it work and not to give up at the first hurdle. Honest discussions are essential and often time afterwards to process new ideas before forming a workable solution. It's essential to know any make -or -break points for members of the side. **Merging the group reinvigorated both sides and led to a real feeling of renewed enthusiasm going forward.**

How Knowledge of Morris Dancing Saved Me from Arrest by the Secret Police!

Written by Francis Suttill

When I finished university in 1962, I decided to travel before taking up a job in the autumn. I went to Iran for four weeks.



One day, walking in the virtually traffic-free streets of Isfahan, I heard music nearby. At a crossroads a crowd was gathered watching two men, while on a nearby rooftop a drummer and a brass player performed. One of the men had a short stick held two-handed

above his head and the other man had a long stick. They danced, then suddenly as part of the performance, the man with the short stick/sword would try to break the ankle of the other man who would defend himself with his stick/lance or javelin. The crowd let me in to watch, but almost immediately I was dragged out backwards by an irate policeman who started to march me towards the police station, unresponsive to my attempts to speak to him in English or French. As we went around a corner, we came face to face with a secret policeman, easily recognisable by his mackintosh, hat, and the bulge of a pistol under his left arm.

After a rapid conversation in Farsi, the secret policeman said his colleague was concerned that I wanted to photograph the dancers so that I could tell everyone at home how primitive they were in Iran. I thought rapidly, and then told him that we had the same type of dance in England, but formalised so that there was no danger to the dancers. He accepted this, took me back to the crowd and ordered them to perform for me to take photos.



Continued overleaf...

Continuation of previous page...

I asked him whether people really did get hurt, and he told me that dancers regularly ended up with broken ankles. I never managed to find the rules of the dance, but I think the swordsman was only allowed a certain number of strikes before they either swapped weapons or another challenger took over.

I have never participated in Morris dancing myself, but my stepfather had when at Oxford in the early 1930s, so thankfully I had enough knowledge to get me out of trouble! I found the photos included in this article when undertaking a massive clear-out recently, and I thought they might amuse someone.

The First Annual Driffield Day of Traditional Dance

Written by Debby Brady - Squire of Makara

All traditions have to start somewhere and so, on Saturday April 15th this year, we launched the First Driffield Day of Traditional Dance. All places have their problems and in Driffield there is a shortage of



large open areas with good footfall which offer plenty of room to dance, while not impeding pedestrian flows. Unlike most modern towns, it has no pedestrian precincts. We were hoping for a day on which there was road

closure for council events and two days were suggested which both clashed with other major Morris events. Of the two, we chose 15th April, even though it did clash with a dance out in Darlington. The road closure was not to be, but with the support of the council, the local Methodist church, and a private landlord, we did acquire four suitable sites.

We focused on inviting teams within a reasonable travelling distance and were delighted to



sign up eight other teams from Scarborough to Scunthorpe. We also had the first major outing of a new local clog dancing trio.

Following a worryingly wet week, the sun came out for us.

We held the finale at the Riverhead, one of East Yorkshire's hidden jewels. This was the head of navigation on the Driffield Navigation, where barges once unloaded coal from West Yorkshire and imports from Kingston upon Hull before returning downriver with local agricultural produce. The navigation Trust have put a lot of work into reopening the navigation to larger craft. Their only remaining major obstacle is the fixed bridge at Wansford, which will hopefully be resolved in my lifetime.



The finale went very well, and we were impressed by the number of locals of all ages who surrounded the dance area. Some of the video of the day has been loaded on YouTube and can be viewed at:

[Wansford Lock Cloggers](#)

[Raving Maes](#)

[Yorkshire Coast](#)

[Beverley Garland](#)

[Tatterfoals](#)

[Ravens](#)

[Rackaback](#)

[Makara](#)

[Green Ginger](#)

England's Glory Ladies Morris Celebrate 50th Anniversary

Written by Anita Carpenter

In August 1972 a conversation took place in the Marine Bar in Sidmouth during the folk festival, which ultimately led to the formation of England's Glory Ladies Morris. Within a few months, practice sessions were being held at The Victory Club in Cheltenham, and by 1973 the side was ready to dance out.



Fifty years on and we have just celebrated our 50th anniversary with a Day of Dance in Gloucester joined by other local sides. We had a fun and sociable day with all current and many former members joining us for celebration tea and cake in the afternoon.



Our name comes from the brand of matches once manufactured by the Moreland family in Gloucester. The family gave us permission to use the name and the ship emblem from the matchbox design. The original kit was a pale blue dress, but this was soon replaced in 1974 by the now familiar long navy skirt

and nautical styled top. By 1983 a boater had been added, and later still the long-sleeved navy top was dropped in favour of a navy cardigan to go with the short-sleeved white top.

The traditional dances we do are from Ilmington as taught to the women of the village by the legendary Sam Bennett following the end of the First World War. The side attended and organised instructional days (run by Tubby and Betty Reynolds and Roy Dommett) out of which the Women's Morris Federation, now The Morris Federation, came into being. Along with Cardiff Ladies and Bath City Morris we were founder members. We now have a repertoire of over 35 dances which includes Garland dances, North West, dances written by other sides and used with their permission, not to mention dances members of our side have written.



We were quite revolutionary in our early years, as Morris was seen to be very much a male preserve. Even up to the mid - 1980s we experienced

other sides refusing to dance at events where we were performing. In 1974 the side appeared at EFDSS headquarters, Cecil Sharp House. In 1977 we were the first women's side to be invited to appear at Sidmouth International Folk Festival and the following year we performed in the Arena at Sidmouth. We were the first women's Morris side to appear on TV when we were on Pebble Mill at One.

Over the past 50 years we've been overseas to Finland, Sweden, and Guernsey. We've danced at many Folk Festivals including Upton -Upon-

Severn, Wimborne, Swanage, Scarborough and Furness and we've been going to Chippenham since it was the Lacock Festival.

Our longest serving current member has clocked up over 40 years with the side, another will celebrate 40 years next year and many of the others have been dancing with us for 20 - 30 years plus. So we must enjoy being part of one of the UK's longest established women's Morris dance sides! Our aim is to "Keeeeeep dancing" for a little while longer!

50th Anniversary of Ellington

Morris

Written by Penny Baron

Ellington Morris, a mixed Cotswold Morris side based in Pinkneys Green near Maidenhead, Berkshire, celebrated their 50th Anniversary this year. The side was established by Ricky Osbourne and Reg Jakes in October 1972 with their first public appearance in 1973.



The group started as a Traditional Cotswold Morris group, learning dances collected from the villages around Oxfordshire, and primarily performed Adderbury, Bampton, Fieldtown and Bledington dances with some Lichfield as the founders had an association with the city.

As Morris is a living tradition the side also performs some of its own Ellington style dances and has regularly introduced a new tradition in the practice months. More recently the side has become a mixed side and expanded their repertoire to include Border style dances and some Rapper sword dances from the North East of England.

Over the years the side has performed at various events such as school fetes, the Knowl Hill Steam Fair, Days of Dance, weddings and at pubs in and around Maidenhead on Wednesday, including dancing during a visit by Ronald for Princess Margaret and Nancy Reagan. *Continued overleaf...*



Continuation of previous page... As part of 'Town twinning' the side has visited Bad Godesburg in Germany, St Cloud in Paris and Kortrijk in Belgium.

The side also performs a traditional Mummers Play on Boxing Day each year, where St George fights the Turkish Knight to the death, and the Doctor and his wondrous horse bring them back to life with the help of Molly, Beelzebub and Father Christmas. There was even a Lego movie version created during Covid.

They perform various 'Wassails', bringing health and good luck for orchards or other fruit crops. This involves selecting the Queen of the Bean who then pours cider on to the roots of the trees and the scaring away of evil spirits.

This originally started at the Black Boy Inn in Hurley as a 'Marrow Wassail' for the cucurbitaceous society performed on St Pyrs day (a Welsh abbot who was so drunk one night he fell into a well). The wassails are now performed at community orchards in the area and were even held at the rediscovered orchard in Cliveden.

The side is shown here on St George's Day supporting Maidenhead Mencap in Maidenhead and donates money each year to support their summer activities. More information can be found at www.ellington.org.uk



'Platinum Capers' for East Kent Morris's 70th Anniversary

Written by Graham Jeffery

This year marks the 70th anniversary of East Kent Morris, founded in Folkestone, Kent, in 1953 as part of the town's International Folklore Festival, and to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. The side



adopted a red, white and blue kit to reflect the royal connection, which was also well-suited to their Gotswold tradition.

To mark this significant anniversary, the side held a weekend of dance called 'Platinum Capers' in Folkestone on Saturday 3 June. Five visiting sides joined East Kent in dancing at several iconic locations around the town, including the Harbour Arm, on the Bayle (outside the British Lion – the oldest pub in town) and on top of the Leas Cliff Hall, coincidentally where the side first danced in 1953.

The sides helping East Kent Morris celebrate were Offcumduns Border Morris and Wantsum Morris from Thanet, Boughton Monchelsea and Wild Women Morris, both from Maidstone, and Sarum Morris from Salisbury in Wiltshire. Jackie Rabone from Hereburgh Morris in Warwickshire also joined in, having taken the opportunity to revisit her home area.



The seaside weather was perfect and crowds of visitors at each stand enjoyed the dancing. After a mass stand in the town's high street at the end of the day, dancers were invited to tea and evening entertainment at Folkestone Bowls Club.

On Sunday 4th June, some sides attended the Battle of Britain Memorial at Capel, where they danced and were given a guided tour of the site. The weather was again sunny and warm, and it brought a very successful weekend to a fitting conclusion.

Our Top IT Tips

Written by Brian Kelly - Morris Federation Co-optee for IT Advice and Support

The Opportunities IT Provide

You use email. You take photos and videos which you share with friends and family. You view videos on your PC – although these days probably on your smart phone or tablet computer. And, of course, you can make use of the expertise you've gained of the devices you own to support your hobbies and interests – including Morris dancing!

The Challenges

What are the main challenges facing sides in exploiting use of IT? In brief:

- * *You don't have a website, or you have a website, but it only attracts a handful of visits*
- * *You have a Facebook page, but there's little engagement*
- * *You don't have the expertise to create or publish videos*

Addressing the Challenges

The good news is that the Morris Federation has addressed these issues – and have been supporting a number of early adopters in raising the visibility of these sides.

Because the Morris Federation's website is large, with many of the almost-500 Federation sides having links to the website, it is deemed 'Google-friendly' - and a Google search for "#morrisedprofile" will find the 'Teamfinder profile' on the Morris Federation website for many sides.

In brief, you don't need a website or Facebook profile for potential recruits to find out about your side – you just need to add a description of your side, ideally with photos and videos.

The Key Drivers - Recruitment and Events

Although having a Google - friendly online presence is now available to all Fed sides (you don't need IT expertise – just the ability to complete an online form!) to better appeal to potential new dancers and musicians, or those who are looking to book a side for their event, it can be helpful to provide a video of your side.

Just like with the description of your side, you'll need to ensure that:

- * *Your video can be found*
- * *Once found, people can then contact you*

We've been working on two approaches to publishing popular recruitment videos by working with:

- * *Folk festivals*
- * *Sides themselves.*

Working with Swanage Folk Festival, we were able to build on our initial work with Bridport Folk Festival. We realised that rather than editing short videos which could be posted to Morris-related channels, it would be better to target online resources likely to be of interest to those with folk-related activities – such as a folk festival's website and/or Facebook page! A total of ten Fed sides agreed to provide short clips which were included in three videos. A Google video search for "#swanagefolkfestival" can find the videos.

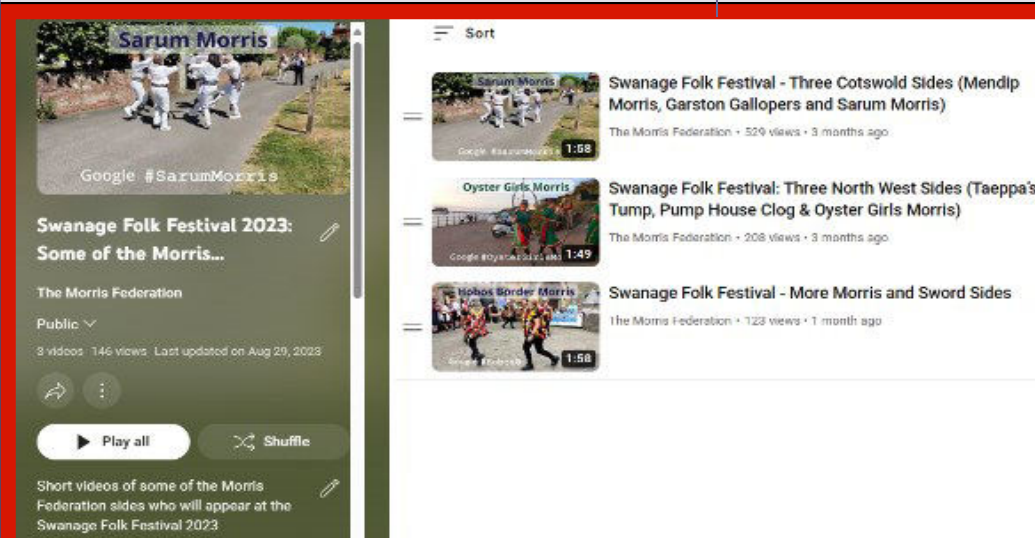
We are now looking to build on our work with the sides who have updated their Teamfinder profile with rich descriptions, photos and videos and, ideally, their side's hashtag and other relevant hashtags (such as #Kit, #MFLocation and #Founded).

Plans for 2024

We want 2024 to be the year of the Morris video! We now have over 90 sides which have added their side's hashtag to their profile, which can be shown for about 10 seconds in a video helping potential new dancers to find contact details. We intend to contact these sides initially and offer to make a short (30 second long) video which can be published on the Federation's digital channels (possibly featuring a side per week as a Facebook Story) as well as encouraging sides to download their video and use it for promotional work locally, such as when you're having a recruitment event.

What Can You Do?

Rather than having a featured Federation side each week it would be great if we could have a featured side every day! We only need 365 sides to update their Teamfinder profile and contact us so that we can identify a video clip lasting for 20 seconds we can use! Do get in touch at comms-it@morrised.org.uk.



The Comms and IT Column is provided by Brian Kelly. Brian began dancing with the Newcastle Kingsmen in 1978 and now dances occasionally with Haymarket Rapper. In his professional career he set up the UK's first university website – and is now sharing his web expertise with the Morris community. To contact Brian send an email to comms-it@morrised.org.uk

The Turning In Song

Oh the beech is copper bright,
And the swifts have taken flight,
And the morning mists, they fall on everything,
Underneath the sweet meadows,
All the bugs and beasts lie low;
Fare thee well, and we'll see you in the Spring.

Out at sea, the storms are here,
And prevailing winds have veered,
And the fishermen have different songs to sing,
In the mountains, heather quivers,
Homeward sheep are all a shiver;
Fare thee well, and we'll see you in the Spring.

Now our feet will beat the floors
Behind the safety of closed doors,
And we'll hide away our bellows and our strings.
For we need to learn our craft,
Capers, galleys, acting daft,
So we can show you when we see you in the Spring.

So come to our village hall,
Raise your heads and heed the call,
And let winder kindle magic - let bells ring!
For through the darker times, we know
There's not very long to go,
Till we can all dance out together in the Spring.

Jenny R Moran, 2023



See You in the Spring!

Wow, what a beautifully, fitting poem to finish off our Autumn/Winter edition of FedExtra. Jess left me some strict instructions that I am to use this end section to say something. So... What a fantastic roundup

of events! I hope you enjoyed reading about everything as much as I did whilst compiling this publication. I am already looking forward to the next one...

Speaking of which, you may be pleased to learn that we will have a FedExtra - Extra JMO 20th Anniversary Edition coming your way in the New Year, which will be packed full of your experiences and pictures of these wonderful, special events which took place across the country over the summer to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of exemption of Morris Dancing from the Licensing Act 2003.

Thank you to everyone who submitted articles, photos and poems for this edition. This publication exists for you, the Fed membership, so if you have anything you would like to submit for consideration into our Spring edition of FedExtra, please do drop us a line at member-comms@morrised.org.uk. Articles with around 300 - 500 words, and a selection of accompanying pictures would be very well received.

I also feel a personal thank you needs to be said to Jess for doing such a wonderful job of Member Communications Officer for the last year. Despite being in the role for a shorter than anticipated time, you have left some incredibly huge shoes (clogs?) to fill. Your smile, positive outlook and willingness to help anyone and everyone has been an absolute breath of fresh air, and I am so grateful to you for having the patience and kindness to help ease me gently into this role, and for making sure I know what I am doing. I don't know that I could have done it without you.

Secondly, thank you to Pauline for getting us both a bit lost in Saddleworth this August. That was the moment which started this whole journey, and I wouldn't be writing this now if I had taken a lift from anyone else that evening. Sometimes going down the wrong road can, quite literally, take you somewhere very new and exciting.

And lastly, I'd like to mention the image on the front cover, as it wouldn't be right to round off the year without saying something about it. It is of the fantastic Emma Laister from Knights of King Ina, jiggling her way to Best Solo Jig victory at the John Gasson Jig Competition with Princess Royal Fieldtown this August in Sidmouth, accompanied by our lovely Jess Searle on flute. Congratulations, ladies! You should be extremely proud, and I know there are many folks out there looking forward to seeing more from you in the future!

Wishing everyone a very merry festive season, and a productive practice one, ready for those May 1st dance outs, which will be upon us sooner than we realise.

Keep dancing!

-Eliza-

