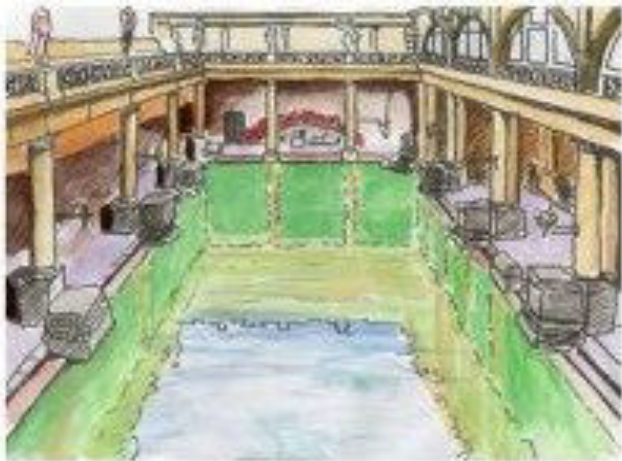


FedExtra



Extra **JMO 20th Anniversary** Special Edition



Bath



Belper



Chester



London



Newcastle



Norwich

Front illustrations by Geoff Roberts

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Welcome!

A very warm welcome to this special edition of the FedExtra, which celebrates the success of all the regional Days of Dance that happened last year, as part of the JMO's anniversary celebrations.



In addition to the Exeter JMO in April, I managed to make it to 4 out of the 6 events, which added an extra layer of significant sparkle to the highlight year of my personal Morris history to date.

Even though I enjoyed seeing lots of familiar and friendly faces at the local event in Bath, it was a different kind of exciting to journey to Norwich, Chester and London to spend time wandering through streets of unfamiliar architecture, and to meet sides I'd never previously encountered.

As for the honour of representing the Morris Federation as part of the 'JMO Jig', I don't even know where to begin...

So before I fall down a hole of merry babbling, best to move on to the magazine proper, which, with thanks to all those who have kindly written articles, will tell you all about it!

-Jess Searle, Member Communications Officer 2023-

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President's Prologue

Pauline Woods-Wilson, President of the Morris Federation

You are all amazing! This special edition of the FedExtra showcases the fun we had at our six regional JMO Days of Dance in 2023 to celebrate 20 years since the exemption for "Morris dancing" from the Licensing Act 2003.

We were hosted by fabulous organising committees and teams up and down the country – dancing in Belper, Norwich, Chester, Bath, Newcastle, and the finale in London with Lord Redesdale who obtained the exemption from the Licensing Act for us all those years ago.

I managed to get to four, out of the six, events, which wasn't bad, as it would have been impossible to do all six without a helicopter, as two were on the same day.



The highlights for me were dancing the 'JMO Jigs', where we managed to get a musician and 2 dancers from across the JMO to dance a jig together, with a full massed dance of JMO Committee at Trafalgar Square in London. I also love looking at the happy faces in the massed photos, showing all the kits represented at each day of dance.

Newcastle and London were extra special, as we presented Frank Lee and Michael Stimpson with their Honorary Life Memberships of the MF, and the Rt Hon Lord Redesdale with a set of commemorative Fridge Magnets. More on the HLMs in the next FedExtra.

The days of dance were all such glorious, happy days where everyone came together to celebrate. Huge thanks to all the organisers, who made it all possible.

-Pauline-



JMO Days of Dance: A Potted History

Written by Mike Everett - Archive Officer, The Morris Federation



In response to the UK government's intent to reform the licensing and regulation of entertainment, in large part to replace the 'two in a bar' rule, it proposed to license all public entertainment. A few keen-eyed individuals in the Morris world, led by John Bacon who was President of The Morris Federation, realised that this would include all performances of Morris dancing, as well as everything from carol singing to circuses. This propelled the three Morris organisations and EFDSS to work closely together to have this change to the law amended. Helped by the Rt Hon Lord Redesdale in the House of Lords, this work was ultimately successful.

The Licensing Act 2003, which came in to force from November 2005, listed Morris dancing as an exemption and the Morris organisations decided to celebrate by organising a joint day of dance in Trafalgar Square on 2nd November 2003. The Joint Morris Organisations were becoming more used to working collaboratively and planned a biennial National Day of Dance to continue celebrating the licensing exemption. The first one was organised by Jean Smith, the Events Officer of The Morris Federation, in Newcastle and Gateshead on St George's Day 2005. Since then, the three Morris organisations have taken it in turn to run these celebrations of dance. From 2010, these days became annual events in the run up to the 2012 London Olympics to try to raise the profile of Morris dancing and to have it included in the Olympics ceremonies. The days of dance are still held annually.

For details of all past JMO Days of Dance, please see the table below.

| Year | Location | Day | Date | Org | Side/Individual host |
|------|---|----------|-------------------|-----|--|
| 2003 | Trafalgar Square | Sunday | 02 November 2003 | JMO | Westminster (& others) |
| 2005 | Newcastle upon Tyne / Gateshead | Saturday | 23 April 2005 | MF | Jean Smith |
| 2007 | Birmingham | Saturday | 14 April 2007 | MR | Jockey MM |
| 2009 | Nottingham | Saturday | 28 March 2009 | OM | Lady Bay Revellers |
| 2010 | Bury St Edmunds | Saturday | 17 April 2010 | MF | Mike & Jenny Everett |
| 2011 | Sheffield | Saturday | 14 May 2011 | MR | Harthill MM |
| 2012 | Stratford upon Avon | Saturday | 30 June 2012 | OM | Shakespeare MM |
| 2013 | Exeter | Saturday | 20 April 2013 | MF | Great Western |
| 2014 | Cambridge | Saturday | 10 May 2014 | MR | Cambridge MM |
| 2015 | Bristol | Saturday | 18 April 2015 | OM | Rag Morris |
| 2016 | York | Saturday | 23 April 2016 | MF | Minster Strays |
| 2017 | Leicester | Saturday | 13 May 2017 | MR | Leicester MM |
| 2018 | Peterborough | Saturday | 19 May 2018 | OM | Crosskey Clog |
| 2019 | Manchester | Saturday | 30 March 2019 | MF | Medlock Rapper |
| 2020 | <i>Cancelled due to Covid</i> | | | | |
| 2021 | Online over Zoom | Saturday | 24 April 2021 | JMO | All 3 Orgs |
| 2022 | Liverpool | Saturday | 09 April 2022 | MR | Morris Ring in the North West |
| 2023 | Exeter | Saturday | 22 April 2023 | OM | Beltane |
| | <i>6 regional events for 20th birthday:</i> | | | | |
| | Belper | Saturday | 09 September 2023 | | Ripley |
| | Norwich | Saturday | 16 September 2023 | | Kemps Men, Golden Star and Friends |
| | Chester | Saturday | 23 September 2023 | | Chester City Morris |
| | Bath | Saturday | 07 October 2023 | | Somerset Morris, Bristol Morris Men, Holt Morris |
| | Newcastle upon Tyne / Gateshead | Saturday | 07 October 2023 | | Black Gate, Monkseaton |
| | London | Saturday | 21 October 2023 | | New Esperance, Westminster |

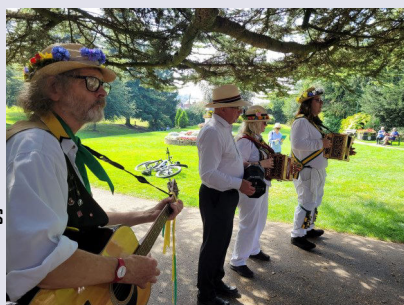
-----JMO Roundup 2023-----

2023 has been an extremely busy year for the JMO, with 6 Days of Dance being held across various counties to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Morris dancing gaining exemption from the Licensing Act 2003. Here's a few accounts of these fantastic days, written by both attendees and organisers...

Belper - 9th September 2023

Written by Judy Buckley - Ripley Green Garters

The JMO Day of Dance for the East Midlands Region was held in Belper in September, on what turned out to be the hottest day of the year for this small Derbyshire town. The town is historically important being part of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. There is a wide range of pubs, cafes, and restaurants in close proximity to the main shopping street.



Although Belper is not far from our name town, Ripley Green Garters have rarely danced there, so it was a great opportunity for us to do so, sharing the day of dance with 10 other sides. Ripley Green Garters were the only North West Clog Morris side attending. We were delighted to be there, having not attended a Day of Dance since being in Perth pre COVID.



With just 10 other sides to see, being in a smaller setting rather than in a large city with its hustle and bustle, the day had a more intimate feel and gave us the opportunity to watch almost every other side perform. Throughout the day the people of Belper were interested in the performances and took time to pause and watch.

"It was nice to see some old traditions still being practised."

Several local businesses were very happy to have been involved and were welcoming to the dancers. At our first spot, shared with Stafford and Uttoxeter Morris, we were given our choice of (non-alcoholic)

drinks which started the day well, especially with the jug of iced water before we moved on to our second spot!

A large conifer with spreading branches provided welcome shade for both musicians and dancers at our second spot at The Memorial Gardens, where we were joined by Lady Bay Revellers and our host side, Ripley Morris. Dancing here took place on a higher level than the street, so it felt like being on a platform with the audience standing on the pavement below a wall looking up at us all.

Shoppers as well as visitors to the town were welcoming and curious, stopping us in the street as we moved around town, asking about the event and where they could see more dancing.

A comment from social media on Facebook noted "*Lots of Morris Dancers around town today, a great spectacle, and really nice to see people appreciate them. Great entertainment.*"

Our third spot was at The Devonshire, an old coaching inn on the A6 where we were joined by the youthful local side Makeney Morris. At another spot we were joined by Greenwood Clog from Nottinghamshire. We laughed at the antics of local Open Morris side Fleet Folkloric Forum and their inventive use of hobby horses.



We then moved on to The Railway. This pub acted as the focal point of the day's events and featured dance displays from 10.30 to 4.15, as well as providing the setting for the after-dance session with Ripley Morris, Dolphin Morris and a member from Lincoln and Micklebarrow, which went on until around 6.30. Most sides were able to perform in the large seating area behind the pub. Feet First Appalachian dancers were based here for the day. They gave all their well-received and skilful performances in the shade of a gazebo. Ripley Green Garters joined Border side Bakanalia from Leicestershire for their spot at The Railway. The dancers attracted the attention of pub customers and passers-by who had a good view of the entertainment, along the high shaded path on their way to the shops.

Ripley Green Garters were mainly dancing dances for six, so it was fun to watch the larger teams - Bakanalia and T'owd Man Border Morris - giving energetic performances at the end of the day.

Then it was back to the Railway for a group photo and a final jig, as the President of the Morris Federation, Pauline Woods-Wilson, joined with Squire of the Morris Ring, Nigel Strudwick, in dancing The Nutting Girl from Fieldtown accompanied by Lady Bay Revellers' musician, Yvonne Walters, from the Open Morris. A fitting end to this first of a series of



JMO Regional Days being held to celebrate 20 years since the exemption of Morris Dancing from the Licensing Act of 2003.

Two further comments:

“What a brilliant day. What amazing groups of wonderful people, and it brought smiles to the faces of Belper people.”

“They all did very well in this heat. Thank you, Ripley Morris, for organising such a wonderful event.”

Norwich - 16th September 2023

Written by Jon Hooton - Golden Star, Big Jigs, Squire of Kemp's Men of Norwich

The East of England's 20th anniversary celebration of the exemption of Morris dancing from the licensing laws, took place in Norwich organised by the four local teams; Golden Star, Big Jigs, Fiddlesticks and Kemp's Men. It was skilfully masterminded by Rachael Miller, an ex-squire of Golden Star. Luckily, we were blessed with wonderful weather. At 10.00am the stewards for each spot were given their instructions and then sent to the eight different sites within the Fine City to ensure there was problem-free dancing all day. Of course, each spot was within reach of one of our excellent public houses. Nineteen different sides attended from all over East Anglia representing Cotswold, Border, North West and Rapper. However, there were no Molly dancers, largely because it was very warm and far too pleasant for the local Norwich Kitwitches, who do not venture out until it becomes dark and cold. The sides attending were as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Alive and Kicking | Golden Star |
| Annie Mation | Fenstanton |
| Belchamp | Fiddlesticks |
| Big Jigs | Hoxon Hundred |
| Bury Fair | Kemp's Men of Norwich |
| Chelmsford | Old School Rapper |
| Danegeld | Pretty Grim |
| Devil's Dyke | Rumburgh |
| East Suffolk | Sutton Masque |
| Ely and Littleport Riot | |

Norwich, of course, has historic connections with Morris dancing, as it was the destination for the Shakespearean comic, William Kemp, who Morris danced there from London in 1600. Another ancient tradition was celebrated by the appearance of 'Snap' the dragon who used to lead the procession of the Guild of St George on St George's Day. 'Snap' came out that day to greet the dancers, and was introduced to Eric, the dragon which accompanies Kemp's Men. There were no more than three sides at each spot, and so everyone got a lot of dancing in during the day, and many friendships were renewed as well as new friends made.



The final spot was on the Millenium Plain. Norwich has many open spaces known as 'Plains' which comes from the Dutch word for square or open space and was brought to Norwich by the Strangers, the protestant Dutch and Flemish who were invited to Norwich in the 16th century to avoid persecution from the invading Spanish, who, of course, were Catholics. Millenium Plain is the new space between the new Millenium building designed by Sir Michael Hopkins and the magnificent St Peter Mancroft, the largest of Norwich's 31 medieval churches. Here all the teams gathered at the end of a great day of dancing for some massed dancing and then the largest 'Bonny Green Garters' that I have been involved in. Before the massed dances we were treated to a Joint Morris Jig performed by Nigel Strudwick (Squire of the Morris Ring, here with Devil's Dyke) and Jen Cox (Chair of Open Morris) with music on the flute by Jess Searle (Membership Communications Officer of the Federation, 2023). This was a fitting end to a lovely day of dancing in a fine City.



Epiphanies of a Kemp's Man

Written by Conor Smith - Kemp's Men of Norwich

Images by Monica Rackham

Walking around Norwich in full Morris kit, I realise I've probably taken the longest way round to the first spot. I am a sole Morris dancer caught in a slipstream of shoppers. Something occurs to me; I am completely comfortable in this scenario. I don't feel any more conspicuous than the people around me.

The squire of Devil's Dyke looks desperately between me, Harvey and Jon, hoping that one of us will just say, 'Yes, we can do Shepherd's Hey, Adderbury,' but we all mumble some excuse



and look blankly at each other. I love Shepherd's Hey, Adderbury. I would also love to watch either Jon or Harvey dance it. This is where I am, this precipice of love both for the dance and for my friends. The words 'I'll give it a go.' come from one of us, and the dance begins.

I congratulate my friend, Jess Searle, on playing for the winning jig at the John Gasson Jig Competition at Sidmouth. She says congratulations to me also, and I am taken aback before she points out the huge red trophy belt around my waist. Ah yes, that.

I see a woman recording all the dancing. I ask if she's a dancer. She's not, but she's loving the performances. I try to explain the significance of the day, and



realise how difficult it is. Something 20 years ago, Trafalgar Square, Licensing Act, et cetera ... She smiles and says, 'Amazing what they will try to license nowadays.' I survive the encounter.

We dance on a slippery mosaic of names. One of them is Will Kemp, which we point out when announcing to the audience. Halfway through the foot down, Harvey finds himself on the floor, and I hear the spirit of Will Kemp laughing.

Chantry Square with Big Jigs. The sun is relentless. The sound of Steve

Hickling playing the rauschpfeife as Big Jigs dance onto the performance area with wooden swords. I first heard the tune, Les Buffons, played on an album of Shakespeare-inspired music by The Baltimore Consort. I lean back and listen to the echo of history.

On London Street, I could be dancing or playing, but instead I'm in The Book Hive. I've found a historical novel about Margery Kempe and her maidservant called Reluctant Pilgrim. The bookseller motions to the badge on my baldric and says 'It's good to see Margery Kempe has her own Morris side.' I don't correct him.

The Forum. It's the end of the day. I'm watching the Chair of Open Morris dance Old Molly Oxford, Fieldtown, with the Squire of the Morris Ring. It's being played by Jess from the Morris Federation.



A tap on my shoulder. It's my ex who, 7 years ago, laughed at me when I started Morris dancing. She seems amazed by how many people there are here, and I recall the 18-year-old me learning how to double step in her kitchen. The call for the massed dancing comes and I wish a hurried farewell. I grab a stick and run.

The crowd disperses. A good day closes. Friends hurry to the pubs. Some hurry home. **The smiles, the laughter, and the ringing of bells remain.**

With huge thanks to the organisers for a wonderful day in the fine city of Norwich.

Chester - 23rd September

Written by Hanneke van Dijk - Rivington Morris

Dear Livia,

"Vigilemus Chorum" - Let us watch dancing!

I apologise for not writing for a while. As mentioned before, life here in Deva is a mixture of the boring (drill, training, tending equipment) and the exciting (the forays out into the hinterland etc.) Recently an unexpected day of pleasure came my way. I headed into the centre of Deva and - ecce (behold) - the natives, Brigantes Cornovii, and many of their friends from other parts of Britannia were there dancing just for the sheer joy of it, Livia! Organised by the Morris Organisations 'Unitarum' (JMO) it was an excellent demonstration of all that is fun, life-enhancing and exuberant in these islands.

It was a gloriously sunny day which highlighted the colourful outfits worn by the dancers and their musicians. The dancing took place at many spots around the centre; Deva is a great place for dancing as there are so many open squares and streets within the town that provide plenty of space to dance in, and the teams came and went, with some two or three sides in each spot. It was interesting, Livia, as there were so many styles present, although I understand that the overall umbrella term is 'Morris'. Some groups stepped into the dance spot with a whoosh and created the atmosphere of "Watch out, we are here! We are here to dance for you so watch us!" Then, with great precision and panache (reminding me of some of our training manoeuvres) sped across and up and down their sets dancing all the while, frequently changing places with other members in the group before heading back to their original place, then starting on the next dance movement. Some individuals stepped into the dance spot bravely on their own and danced, leapt, and skipped spiritedly before us. Some came on as a group and danced continuously in a circle, constantly holding iron bars between them and never letting go – interesting!

Each group were attended by their own musicians who provided such glorious music with such rhythm that it made me want to skip and dance too, Livia. (What would my commander have thought of that – fraternising with the natives!) Their instruments were such, of course, that they could carry with them as they progressed around the different spots – there were drums, melodeans, whistles, violins, and many more. You may not know these instrumental terms, Livia, but I can assure you they created wonderful melodies.

And the colours! The spectacle! All the colours of the rainbow were present among those groups. A veritable peacock parade in front of us. These were not shy retiring folk; they wore outfits made of bright vivid colours, red, blue, green, orange, yellow – all the bright colours you can imagine. And as they danced in their patterns and figures the colours swirled around with them, creating a visual feast.

At the end of the festival all the groups came together in one spot and did one final dance each. They danced in a square and on one wall facing the square some local artist had painted some maxims. One maxim was "Do one thing at a time". These groups had absolutely



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taken that on board – they were dancing to their utmost and as if there was nothing else you could possibly want to do. Another maxim was "Smile", and I found myself and the rest of the audience doing that constantly throughout the day, caused by the pleasure that was created by the dancing. I wish you could have seen it all Livia; it was joyous and life enriching. All who were there were so grateful to those who had organised and presented such a spectacle which will live in the memory of those who saw it/took part in it for a very long time.

*Vale,
Gaius*

A Steward's View of the Deva Day of Dance in Chester

Written by Jess Searle - Member Communications Officer 2023

I was hugely excited to have had the opportunity to attend the Deva Day of Dance in Chester as both steward and representative of the Morris Federation, alongside fellow Committee members Pauline Woods-Wilson, and Mike and Jenny Everett. Having been at the equivalent Norwich-based event the previous weekend, I was full of momentum for supporting what has turned out to be the most brilliant series of JMO regional events to celebrate 20 years of the exemption of Morris Dancing from the Licensing Act.

The wonderfully written organisation emails by Dave Laughlin and Tony Foard brightened up my inbox in the run-up to the proceedings, and despite not being familiar with the city itself, I felt wonderfully supported and encouraged in my role as a steward.

After a quick stop at the Commercial Hotel to register, all sides present gathered at the Town Hall Square, where Eddie Worrall (past Squire of the Morris Ring) gave a warm and hearty hello before introducing Cllr Sheila Little, the Lord Mayor of Chester, who welcomed the dancers with official enthusiasm.

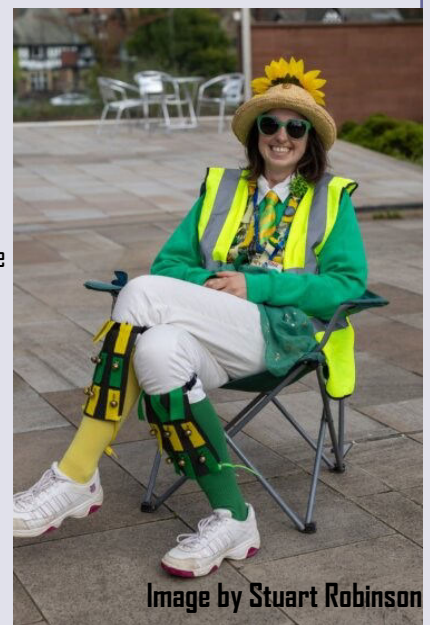


Image by Stuart Robinson

Eddie rejoined his side, Saddleworth Morris Men, who gave an energetic and engaging performance to mark the beginning of the rest of the day.

While everyone else headed off to their first spot, I stayed at the Town Hall Square and couldn't help but smile at the look on a tourist's face as the rubbish bin thanked him for throwing his used coffee cup away.

Apart from a drop of Cotswold from Manchester Morris, I had a merry morning of North West dancing to admire, with performances from Saddleworth Morris Men, Earlsdon Morris Men, Milltown Cloggies and Newburgh Morris. As the sides based more locally to me in Somerset are mainly Cotswold and Border, it was a treat to be able to enjoy such a varied display of North West dancing.

After lunch, I enjoyed a walk through the Cathedral grounds and City Walls to land at the Gorse Stacks, where I was based for the afternoon. I enjoyed further performances from Milltown Cloggies and Newburgh, as well as Green Man Morris, Earl of Stamford Morris, Rivington Morris and Southport Swords.

To round the day off, we all headed to Exchange Square for an informal farewell gathering of performances, brilliantly co-ordinated by Simon Newman of Earlsdon Morris. There was also a rendition of the 'JMD Jig', this time Fieldtown Molly Oxford, performed by representatives from each organisation – Pauline Woods-Wilson for the Morris Federation and Nicki Pickering for Open Morris, accompanied by John Portlock of the Morris Ring on melodeon.



Image by Stuart Robinson

I really enjoyed putting together a video reel of the final displays, which can be found at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VA-lszv-cc>

Also, be sure to check out the official photographs of the event taken by Stuart Robinson, who is to thank for some of the photos included here (the group shot, the photo of me as a steward, and the one of the representing officers and organisers with Cllr Sheila Little). He's very kindly offered a special discount to members of the Morris Federation, so if you'd like to purchase any of his photos for your archive, please get in touch and we'll pass on the code. You can find

his photos at:

<https://images.stuartrobinson.photography/gallery/deva-day-of-dance/home>

All in all, it was wonderful to see the dancers and musicians having such a brilliant time, and to witness the impact the performances had on various members of the public, who stopped to watch with smiles and applause for the joyful displays provided by the sides throughout the day.

Huge thanks to Tony, David, and all those involved in the organisation and running of such a wonderful Day of Dance, which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone! A great success!

Bath – October 7th

Written by Drew Knight - Morris Federation Secretary

36 Morris and Sword teams travelling across from the South of England, and as far north as Birmingham, visited Bath for the celebratory day of dance. Sides with long histories and sides just formed were present. In some cases, this was the first public dance out for some sides, with new dancers all doing themselves a lot of credit and offering splendid performances.

Represented were sides dancing Cotswold, North West, Border, Stave, Rapper and Step Clog (Canadian, English and Welsh).

After a gathering at the beginning of the day in Kingston Parade with welcome speech and Show Dancing, the sides dispersed to twelve locations in the city to dance and entertain the public. At lunchtime, impromptu music sessions were formed as a way to continue the entertainment, all adding to the atmosphere of the day.

At the outset of this series of events, members of the committees of the 3 organisations (where possible) joined to dance together – in Bath, Bledington 'Ladies of Pleasure' was performed by Drew Knight (Federation), Grant Glanville (Ring) and Fee Lock (JMD), accompanied by Jess Searle (Federation) and Jen Cox (Open Morris) on the flute and whistle. Show dances by Holt Morris, Bristol Morris Men, Somerset Morris and Mendip Morris followed.





At this point I moved off with my team to the first spot. This went without a hitch for the most part - all the teams know how it works - we danced, watched, made

purchases from the fruit stall and generally enjoyed the ambiance. At one point, we were unexpectedly joined by a bounding Labrador who was very keen on the sticks, but thankfully our superb steward successfully caught the dog by its lead and kept it safely entertained until the owner had a chance to catch up, which happened to coincide with the end of the dance! This was the only minor mishap of the day, with the rest rolling along smoothly.

Bath is a lovely place to dance with many good sites and majestic backdrops; the audience engaged well with the dancing, and I spoke to many tourists who were enamoured with the expression of culture we were providing, which clearly enhanced their experience of Bath.



Full credit to members of the Show Teams, from whom most of the stewards were drawn, and among whose ranks the organisers are members – without them none of this would have been possible.

-Drew-

A Sword Dancer's-Eye View of the Day!

Written by Jen Cox - Chair of Open Morris

I was very proud to take part in the 'JMO Jig' at the beginning of the day. This lovely tradition has been born as a result of organising these events around the country and seems a very fitting way to showcase the friendship and good teamwork that characterises the

JMO these days.

After hurriedly changing into rapper kit off the back of the jig, Mabel Gubbins set off in earnest to begin our tour of Bath.



The organisers had very kindly and skilfully selected nice flat surfaces for us to dance on, so we didn't feel the lack of wooden pub floors too badly and enjoyed dancing on the wooden stepping floor at our second spot. It was great to dance with some teams we hadn't met before, as well as some old friends, and the odd family member! We enjoyed showcasing our multitalented membership too, as in addition to rapper we were able to perform step clog dances and Cotswold jigs during the day.

Bath in the glorious sunshine was a delightful place to dance, with lots of appreciative audiences throughout the day, and it was nice to cap the day with a joining-in dance at our last spot with Dwlswick and Styx of Stroud.

Many thanks to all the organisers for a great day out, and an excellent showcase for the Morris!

A View From Mendip Morris

Written by Pauline Heslop - Mendip Morris

The JMO Regional Day of Dance in Bath on 7th October was a great day and all the Mendip Morris dancers and musicians had a wonderful time. Huge thanks and appreciation to the organisers who made it such a relaxed, friendly and well-organised day.

The journey into Bath on the Park and Ride bus set the tone for the rest of the day – catching up and banter with other Morris sides, curiosity and interest from the general public, and appreciation that



the day's organisers had arranged such a beautiful, sunny, warm day. Registration done, a coffee venue was chosen according to whether it had a loo!

We were scheduled to do a Show Dance, being fairly local to Bath, and felt honoured to be able to dance our own dance, Priddy Fair – named after a small hamlet at the top of the Mendips, famous for its sheep fair and folk festival. That done, we set off for our first dance venue.



During the day we danced at several more stops, enjoying the company of different Morris sides, some of whom we knew, others that we got to know. There are many abiding memories, but the ones that have stayed in my mind have mostly been of the audience being interested and having a great time themselves. We had lots of questions about Morris dancing and the day of dance itself from interested locals and visitors to Bath – some overseas visitors saying that it had made their visit to Bath very special. We had children jiggling along to the music, watching on entranced – and their faces



lighting up when we gave them a badge. As for the hen party we encountered... well, what more can I say! As a side, we had a great time too, being able to

spend time with each other and with other sides over a few beers at lunchtime.

We were pretty exhausted by the end of the day, but getting the Park and Ride bus was not for the faint hearted as the home rugby game had just finished. Curiosity and interest in Morris dancing continued on the bus, with lively discussions with rugby supporters about all things Morris...Well, and rugby! It was a fun end to a wonderful day.

To the organisers of the day – you have our respect and admiration. Thanks for making the day run so smoothly and for all of your hard

work behind the scenes. You were amazing!

Newcastle- October 7th

Written by Jessica Wharf - Border Reivers and
Rebecca Wharf - Black Diamond Mixed Cotswold Morris

The Newcastle regional JMO was held over several sites in the city, ranging from the iconic quayside and a hop over the Tyne into Gateshead, to the Great Hall of the castle itself, and other locations in Newcastle's city centre.



Despite grey skies, the dancing in the town started to lots of interested locals and plenty of enthusiasm from all sides involved. The city's many pubs were welcoming and their patrons full of questions about the event, to which the correct reply was that it was a competition and that your side was definitely winning. It may be worth noting that drinking on the streets of Newcastle is expressly forbidden, even from a tankard: a local law we are certain all abided by.

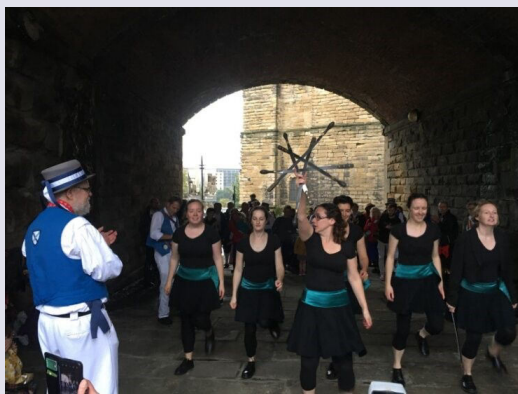
For the Reivers, as lonely exiles of the Morris world up in Scotland, we were delighted to be dancing just over the border in Newcastle – a mere 3.5 hours' drive away! The Baltic and Quayside spots were just beautiful, with the Millennium Bridge arching behind us as we danced. Another great spot was outside the Railway Station with always-welcome level ground – the people caught up in the train problems that day got some unexpected quality entertainment to cheer things up while waiting for their taxis! Reivers spent both afternoon spots at Old Eldon Square which gave us the chance to use the 15 minutes between spots to teach Tinnors Rabbit to (mostly) willing victims. The famed friendliness of the Geordies was much in evidence as members of the public asked to learn dances, and kids asked to be face-painted in Reiver blue.

For Black Diamond, we joined Leeds Morris as a mixed side on the day, both sides being short of dancers. These sides have joined up before at Saltburn, with several dances in common. Of the dancing, there were some really excellent displays. Particularly noteworthy was the song-led Ulverston Clog dance to Byker Hill from Hadrian Clog in the Great Hall of the castle. Byker is just down the road, making this about as Geordie as it gets. Monkseaton, based nearby in North Shields, was dancing sword and Morris, changing kits and traditions with equal ease, and gave a particularly good showing at the quayside.



As the drizzle came on during the last spot, we all scuttled to the finale with our rags dripping and our hair in rat tails. In between the Black Gate – from which our host team takes their name – and the Castle Keep, the teams huddled under a railway arch in the gathering gloom. Before the dancing began, Frank Lee received an EFDSS Gold Badge award and Honorary Life Membership of the Morris Federation with Burt Hunter giving an excellent account of Frank's life and involvement in the folk world.

The atmospheric setting clearly inspired the sides and they gave it their all. The railway arch above was particularly effective for those dances with a sung or vocal element. The booming voices of Hexham rang out to the tune of the Happy Man with their dancing described by one Reiver as having 'objectively perfect form', and the eldritch screeches of Wayzgoose echoed off the railway arch above during their excellent Twiglet.



The Morris spirit also rang true with several spectating dancers adorably concerned when a Reiver lost our mascot, a toy Highland Coo (cow) named Morag, mid dance. Despite the onlookers' valiant retrieval attempts, Morag remained on the loose throughout the dance and it was sheer luck no one came to grief on this hairy trip hazard.

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A 'JMD jig' was performed by Nigel Strudwick (Squire, Morris Ring), Pauline Woods-Wilson (President, Morris Fed) played for beautifully by Jo Smith (Tynebridge Morris, of Open Morris).



After the finale, there was a session at The Central, just over the bridge in Gateshead. With a great selection of real ales and lots of space, this pub was well suited to the hordes of descending Morris dancers. Several jigs were danced by an unholy combination of dancers from various teams, including Old Tom, Knuckledown (though the perpetrator of this jig insists he does not remember it), Nutting Girl, and Princess Royal, for which the dancers gave it absolutely loads.

A very fitting end to the day, with representatives from all sides mingling, singing, dancing and slowly filtering home after a day of dancing with friends from all over the region.

Joint Morris Organisations 20th Anniversary 2023



Bath



Belper



Chester



London



Newcastle



Norwich

It wouldn't be right to share stories of the JMD 20th Anniversary Days of Dance without sharing the story behind these beautiful designs by Geoff Roberts, which you may have noticed on the front cover. They were designed to put onto badges for participants in the JMD 20th Anniversary events to purchase as a souvenir; A different design for each event, featuring local landmarks. A lovely keepsake!

London - 21st October. THE BIG FINALE!

Written by New Esperance Morris - Organisers of the event

This year, New Esperance Morris took on the challenge of organising the final Joint Morris Organisations Licensing Act Exemption Day of Dance in London.

Central to the requirements for this event was the use of Trafalgar Square, which had been the venue for the original celebration in 2003. This presented us with several difficulties, not least the process of getting permission to dance there. For a free community event there is no charge, but there is a risk that a fee-paying event could steal the date. We started our application for the use of Trafalgar Square in March, but didn't receive final approval until two weeks before the event.

And, of course, every protest march and political rally wants to go via the Square on the way to Whitehall.

Then there was the problem of finding places suitable for dancing in central London. It's not easy, as there are no pubs with gardens or car parks, or open spaces which don't belong to someone. We had hoped to use parks, but they are prohibitively expensive.

With 40 sides booked up, we had to find 10 pubs within walking distance, and then draw up a schedule that allowed sides to dance with as many others as possible, while accommodating those who shared musicians, or just needed more space. We had a waiting list, so when any side dropped out and was replaced, we had to recheck our plans.

Five days before the event, we heard that a very large march was likely to pass through the Square. Frantic research established that it wouldn't reach us until at least one o'clock, so we could use the square for a while, and didn't have to cancel Lord Redesdale's speech. However, the route of the march meant that sides would not be able to get to some of the pubs we had arranged for the afternoon. We had to find extra pubs in a hurry, and some were rather smaller than we would have liked. Much re-planning was required, and we drew up contingency plans - these last-minute schedules were not sent out



until the Thursday evening, so unsurprisingly there was a bit of confusion on Saturday!

From the outset, we had decided to have morning dance spots near stations, so that sides could meet easily and travel together into central London. This worked very well, and we had marshals to meet and greet, and collect contact numbers to add to an essential WhatsApp group for the day.



Knowing that our time was limited, we rushed through the dancing and some sides were surprised to find that they had missed their spot, but we managed to fit everyone in before abandoning the Square, when the march started arriving with

shouts and fire-crackers. Our portable P.A. had been left switched on by accident and the battery was dead. We had to borrow Seven Champions' P.A. for speeches. (Thank you!)

Lord Redesdale reminisced happily about his role in the exemption 20 years ago, then the heads of all 3 orgs - Nigel Strudwick, Jen Cox and Pauline Woods-Wilson - gave thank yous, and Lord Redesdale was presented with 6 commemorative Fridge Magnets. Michael Stimpson was then presented with his Honorary Life Membership of the Morris Federation. Lord Redesdale also asked to join in with a Morris dance and Lyme Morris happily agreed.

And did we mention the rain? Steady in the morning, and torrential downpours in the afternoon. How can this have worked?

But it did!

Thank you to all sides for your flexibility and enthusiasm. From Leicester Square to Covent Garden there was the sound of bells, sticks and clogs all afternoon. The dancing at Trafalgar had a special energy to it, particularly the group 'JMO dance', Shepherd's Hey, performed by officers from all three organisations - Federation, Ring and Open. On top of this, we made new friends and found a lot of nice pubs we hadn't known before... **Glorious!**



London JMO Anniversary 2023

- An Invited Side's Experience

A Report Written by Northfields Morris

Well, it had to rain on a half-term weekend at the end of October... but that didn't stop around 40 Morris Sides enjoying a day in and around Trafalgar Square, mystifying the tourists. The London JMO DoD continued in and between the showers, save for just a few sessions at the end of the afternoon when the Rain Gods decided that they would be putting on the most consistent display of the day. By that time, a number of the dances, scaled down for the purpose, had transferred inside the pubs; for this and their day-long hosting, we must thank The Imperial, The Round House, and The Bear and Staff – and these were just the pubs Northfields were booked to dance at, from a dozen and a half all told including those at London Terminus railway stations.

It was a special day for Northfields Morris: having formed in September 2014, we had decided to do 10 new or special events to mark our 10th year, so this was a great early event for us and a momentous first dance-out for our youngest member, anticipating her 9th birthday. It also gave us the chance to meet up with old friends and sides that we had met throughout our 10-year journey.

We started the day behind the entrance to the Crypt at St Martin-in-the-Fields; a little bit tucked away but the five sides managed to attract some curious bystanders from the main drag, and the cafe in the Crypt was warm and welcoming.



Then on to one of two dance spots in Trafalgar Square itself, which was busy with people from all walks of life, crisscrossing in all directions despite the intermittent rain.. The writer managed to resist the temptation to give all kinds of spurious explanations to the baffled visitors but fell back on a brief history going back to the 15th century and the uncertain origins of Morris from Moorish or maybe from the

Latin mors / moris meaning 'custom'...

Then it was up the Lane and diagonally through Leicester Square to get to the Imperial where we danced on the pedestrianised road outside, and later inside. Clearly, Morris dancers are not colourful enough, so we were lucky to be joined by a gold 'statue', giving us the opportunity to photograph The Wild Hunt Bedlam Morris in a bizarre



tableau. Since it was cameras all round, we also took his picture with Horris the Morris Horse, our indefatigable mascot, without whom no Northfields performance is complete. The same goes for our skilled and stalwart musicians: thank you all for keeping us in time and for putting up with the rain... If a dancer's flowers, bells, tat-

ters, etc. get wet they just need to dry off; get your bellows or fiddle soaked and you are in a world of trouble! It was interesting to see the musical value of the humble bin liner!

On to The Bear and Staff in Bear Street for some more singin' and dancin' in the rain (plus necessary imbibing to keep the insides wet as well). By our next spot at The Round House, it was gone 5 o'clock and the rain had increased with the approaching dusk, so a decision was made to call a damp halt - we were not the first to literally bail out! Apologies were given, but nobody was surprised or upset.

So ended a moist but enjoyable day celebrating the exemption of Morris from the Licensing Act 2003; had it not been for that, we probably wouldn't have been there at all. It felt amazing to dance in the very heart of this historic city, and our thanks and admiration go out to all at JMO who made it happen.

So, what's next for Northfields' Anniversary year? We really ought to dance out at Northfields tube station... And, as a West London side, perform our East Acton Stick Dance at East Acton station! We also hope to build on our blossoming international reputation following a first outing to Germany last year. Watch this space...

You may be pleased to learn that The Morris Federation is on Youtube! Check out the link below to see videos of the JMO Days of Dance and much, much more!

<https://www.youtube.com/@MFnotation>

20 Years of Celebration...

London 2003



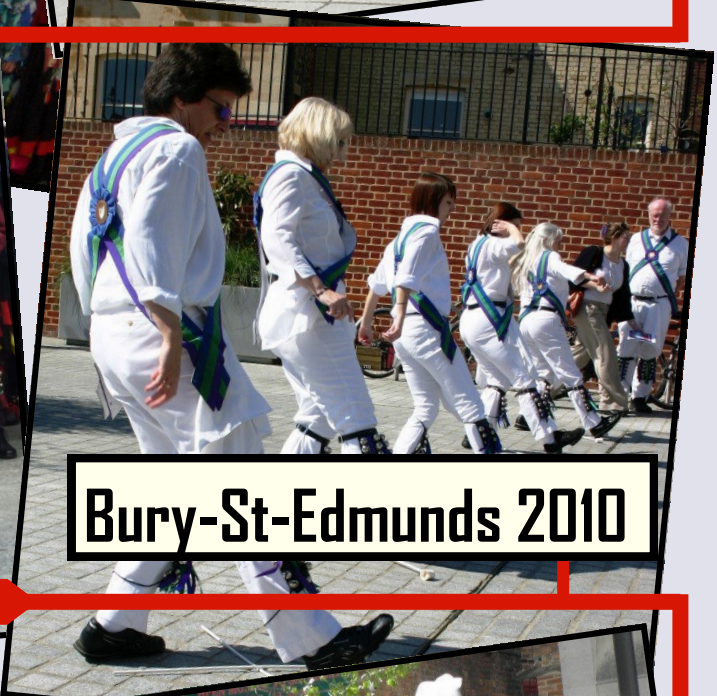
Newcastle 2005



Nottingham 2009



Bury-St-Edmunds 2010



Exeter 2013



Sheffield 2011



Cambridge 2014



Bristol 2015



York 2016



Leicester 2017



Manchester 2019



Online via Zoom 2021



Liverpool 2022



Exeter 2023



Mad Baz Images ©



Belper 2023



Norwich 2023



Bath 2023



Chester 2023



Newcastle 2023



London 2023



To The Future

----A Few Final Thoughts----

So there you have it! What a wonderful way to mark twenty years of Morris Dancing being exempt from the Licensing Act!

The thing that shines through from all of the various accounts is the joy at being together, and sharing our combined passion for this utterly brilliant pastime as a cohesive community.

It's taken quite a journey to get here, so a huge hats off to the JMD Committee, to all the organisers behind the scenes, and to anyone else that's poured their heart and soul into bringing this all together over the years.

What an amazing bunch you are!

Reiterated thanks to those who have provided articles, and to Eliza Russell, both for asking me to provide the Editor's notes for this special edition, and for formatting the articles and pictures Pauline and I have collected into something we can all read and enjoy!

Keep an eye out for the next edition of the FedExtra, Spring/Summer 2024, and be sure to submit any articles you may have gathered in the meantime to Eliza at member-comms@morrisfed.org.uk. In the traditional words of Douglas Adams, so long, and thanks for all the fish!

-Jess Searle, Membership Communications Officer 2023-

Whilst reading your submissions, selecting images, and putting this together, I couldn't help but take a trip down memory lane and feel quite touched whilst remembering how, in 2003, at 9 years old, I danced in London for the very first JMD. Back then I had no idea what it was about, or that I would still be part of this community and do exactly the same thing, but as an Officer of The Morris Federation, 20 years on. The community spirit, passion, dedication and camaraderie which brought us all together back then is still very much alive, and is the beating heart of the Morris today. I am both honoured and proud to be a part of something so very special. Here's to 20 years of coming together, and to 20 years more to come!

-Eliza Russell, Membership Communications Officer 2024-