

FED EXTRA

50TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

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President gets Gold

Pauline Woods-Wilson is awarded an EFDSS Gold Badge for outstanding contributions to morris and the folk world

The Morris Federation over 50 years

Shirley Dixon provides us with a short history of the Morris Federation and its origins

50th Anniversary days of dance in pictures

Photos from Armitage, Exmouth and Sheffield. Is your team in one?

Plus much, much more...



WHAT'S INSIDE?

Cover Stars!

Pauline Woods-Wilson and Dennis Taylor after their final dance with Windsor Morris during the 2025 AGM weekend in Sheffield. Photo by BarryP/
www.pixelsonapage.com

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Welcome to your long-awaited 50th Anniversary Special Edition FedExtra!

This edition is rammed not just with images and memories from our three Anniversary days of dance, but also with a hefty dose of nostalgia as we remember the past, celebrate the present, and look to the future.

Join Shirley Dixon on a journey spanning 50 years, tracking the growth of the once small Women's

Morris Federation into the largest Morris Organisation in the UK, and take a trip down memory lane as we remember Officers past and present in our Morris Fed family timeline.

If that isn't enough to keep you going, join Windsor Morris on page 12 as they recap 50 years of dancing, and see if you can spot them amongst our founding teams on page 9.

Of course, this year hasn't just been a year of celebrating our wonderful organisation, but also a time of celebrating the people who make the Morris Fed what it is today as our President, Pauline Woods-Wilson, was awarded an EFDSS Gold Badge for outstanding and remarkable contributions to folk and folk arts. She was also awarded a gold rubber ducky... Why, you may ask? The answer can be found on page 17, along with links to videos of the presentation and citation, as well as a slideshow of Pauline's morris life in pictures. We are so proud of her!

Here's to 50 years of the Morris Fed and 50 more!

- Eliza Russell -

President's Prologue



Happy 50th Birthday to us!

The Morris Federation was founded as the Women's Morris Federation in 1975, so 2025 was our 50th Anniversary, and we really celebrated in style. In addition to our annual Day of Dance and AGM which we spent in Sheffield (the folk capital of England) ably hosted by Pecsætan Morris, Five Rivers Morris and Sheffield City Morris, we had two extra regional Days of Dance – with Grimspound Border in Exmouth, Devon, and with Beggar's Oak Clog Dancers in Armitage, Staffordshire. Together with the JMO Day of dance in Stockport, that was a total of around 130 teams attending the days of dance. What a fantastic way to celebrate our 50th year.

From our humble beginnings of just a handful of keen founder teams, The Morris Federation has grown to over 500 member

teams today - I wonder if our founders could have foreseen that growth? We have some excellent archive photos of our early teams curated by our past Committee, and a short read of our 50-year history thanks to Shirley Dixon. We would not be here today without all our past and present Committee and volunteers, and we are truly indebted to you all.

How has morris changed over the past 50 years? Well, there certainly is a lot more of it about these days! Morris and related activities change and develop alongside the culture of the day. New dances are being created all the time; old dances are tweaked and reimaged; morris is combined with circus skills and crossovers from other dance forms and other musical genres. That's what I love about the morris – there is a place for everyone – for those who want to be faithful to the written

notation, and for those who want to take it into new and exciting directions.

On a personal note, I have been so very honoured to receive a Gold Badge award from the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) for achievements in my role with The Morris Federation; it being awarded in our 50th year made it extra special. Thank you to Eliza Russell and Drew Knight for nominating and seconding me. Being recognized by an outside organization for work done within this one has made me feel that The Morris Federation has become much more visible in the last few years.

It was an emotional year too, as Dennis and I reached the end of an era – we have hung up our green and white rosettes, as we retired from Windsor Morris at the end of their 50th year, after a fun and rewarding 30 years, our last performance being the day after the AGM.

How will morris change over the next 50 years? Your guess is as good as mine! With today's dances being videoed and shared all over the place, there is no shortage of information about how today's dances are being done, and, with access to videos of other dance styles, I can foresee new dances spreading more rapidly, and innovation continuing to grow and grow. And long may it continue.

Keep on Dancing!

- Pauline Woods-Wilson -

Contact Your Committee

Since the previous edition of FedExtra, the role of Notation Officer has been combined with that of the Archive Officer, with the role being taken on by Jerry West, and we have also welcomed Helena Painting, Rob Tidy and Peter Celi-Stamp onto the Committee.

Elected Officers



President
Pauline Woods-Wilson (she/her)
president@morrisfed.org.uk



Secretary
Drew Knight (he/him)
secretary@morrisfed.org.uk



Member Communications
Eliza Russell (she/her)
member-comms@morrisfed.org.uk



Treasurer
Peter Celi-Stamp (he/him)
treasurer@morrisfed.org.uk



Events
Rob Tidy (he/him)
events@morrisfed.org.uk



Marketing
Helena Painting (she/her)
marketing@morrisfed.org.uk



Archive
Jerry West (he/him)
archive@morrisfed.org.uk
*Archive Officer post combined with
Notation Officer in March 2026

Co-optees



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



Keeper of the Bells
Lin Steel (she/her)
bells@morrisfed.org.uk



Special Projects
Jenny Everett (she/her)
jenny@morrisfed.org.uk



Special Projects
Mike Everett (he/him)
mike@morrisfed.org.uk



Social Media
Lucy Grainger (she/her)
socialmedia@morrisfed.org.uk



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Roary Neat (they/them)
edi@morrisfed.org.uk



Project Manager for Youth Projects
Jasmine Farram (she/her)
jasmine@morrisfed.org.uk

Get Social!

The Morris Federation is active on a range of social media platforms. Give us a follow to stay up-to-date with our latest events and news.



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themorrisfed.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/themorrisfed.bsky.social)



www.morrisfed.org.uk/

Dates For Your Diary

Morris Fed Events

► Morris Federation Day of Dance and AGM Weekend 2026 (Stoke-on-Trent)

Saturday 26th September 2026 - Sunday 27th September 2026

The Morris Federation and Domesday Morris extend a warm welcome to all members of The Morris Federation for a day of dance, followed by the Morris Federation's AGM.

Please see www.morrisfed.org.uk/event/morris-federation-day-of-dance-and-agm-2026/ for more details.

AGM 2026
Stoke on Trent

Sat 26th September 2026 at 16:00



► Joint Morris Organisations' Weekend Of Dance 2027 (Sheffield)

Friday 9th April - Sunday 11th April 2027

In 2027 the day of dance is in Sheffield, hosted by Five Rivers Morris, on behalf of the Morris Federation. Please see

www.morrisfed.org.uk/event/jmo-day-of-dance-2027/ for more details.



Events From Other Orgs

► Illustrious Order of Fools and Beasts Unconvention 2026 (Faversham and Canterbury, Kent)

Friday 23rd October 2026 - Sunday 25th October 2026

Please see www.morrisfed.org.uk/event/fools-beasts-unconvention-2026/ for more details.

BOOKINGS OPEN UNTIL 3RD OCTOBER.



FedExtra

Submissions

Guidelines

We always welcome your submissions for publication in future editions of FedExtra.

As well as articles on things relevant to your side, such as anniversaries or days of dance, we welcome other submissions not limited to, but including, book reviews, creative writing, poetry, photographs, comic strips, illustrations. If it's interesting to you, and relevant to morris, then send it through and we will consider it.

We are especially keen to provide a voice for our members aged under 18, and would love to receive submissions for our Youth Column, as well as anything relevant to Sword Dancing, Molly, Step Dancing, Mumming, Fools and Beasts, morris of all traditions, and related activities. We aim to publish as diverse a range of topics as we can.

Articles should ideally be no longer than 500—750 words in length; submissions are subject to editing for readability and space restrictions, and we request that content is family friendly, with appropriate language. We may edit articles which do not follow these guidelines.

Please accompany your articles with at least 3 high-quality photographs or illustrations, along with details of whom to credit, and captions where possible.

We accept JPG, IMG, PNG image types, and request that any images embedded into documents are also sent separately.

Submissions can be sent to Eliza Russell, our Member Comms Officer, at: member-comms@morrisfed.org.uk

Content Disclaimer:

Opinions and views expressed within these pages are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of The Morris Federation, except articles by committee members.

50 Years of The Morris Federation

Written by Shirley Dixon. For more information on our history, please see www.morrisfed.org.uk/about/50th-history

When I was a young morris dancer, in the 1980s, it was not at all unusual to hear spectators say 'I didn't know women did it', or even 'I didn't know women were allowed to do it'. Now people are taken aback if you tell them that morris used to be a male-only world. As with many things, it now seems bizarre that women were excluded, but it needed a fight to overturn the entrenched attitudes, and the Morris Federation led that fight.

The morris world in 1975

How did morris become a male preserve? Its distant history is very much lost in the mists of time. It seems to have been quite a high-status entertainment in the late Middle Ages, but since few people then could read or write, the only thing recorded about it was the bills! In the 17th century it became part of the culture wars between 'Cavaliers' and 'Roundheads', and the disapproving Puritans labelled it as 'pagan'. Banned during the Commonwealth, it was revived when the monarchy was restored in 1660, but numbers of potential patrons dwindled as the centuries progressed, landowners taking a derisive attitude.

At the end of the 19th century, only about four villages in the Cotswolds were regularly fielding a morris team – but interest was growing in 'quaint' traditions and revivals were staged for celebrations such as Queen Victoria's jubilees in 1887 and 1897. Cecil Sharp, a professional musician with an interest in folk song, saw dancers at Headington Quarry on Boxing Day 1899, and so could recommend them when Mary Neal, a philanthropist running a club for disadvantaged young women in London, asked whether he knew of

any dances suitable for her club. It was the 'Espérance Girls' who made morris popular again, and they taught and demonstrated all over the country and even in the USA.

However, Sharp saw William Kimber of Headington as the ideal of morris, and wanted the dance to be disseminated as an art, not used, as Neal favoured, as a tool for social good. He gained predominance, founding the Folk Dance Society in 1911, and it was his vision of morris which the Society taught, backed by his extensive research into Cotswold and sword traditions but ignoring the variants which did not fit his theories. Morris was still being performed in towns of Cheshire and Lancashire, by teams of men, women and children, and there was dancing occasionally in the Welsh Borders, but to most people in the first half of the 20th century, the word 'morris' meant Cotswold morris.

Those learning from the Folk Dance Society were largely women, since Sharp had succeeded in getting morris into the school curriculum, but the prevailing view was that it was really a men's dance. The attitude had been growing through the 19th century that a woman's place was in the home, and that the ideal woman was a delicate creature. The village morris encountered by Sharp and Neal was very much a man's world, based around pubs (in which no respectable woman would be seen), and this was the world which the Morris Ring was founded in 1934 to recreate. No longer would morris be restricted to dance-halls and stage entertainment. It was taken out onto the streets again – but by male dancers.

Women join the dance

And that was very much still the

situation encountered by women in the 1970s, when the fight for equality was really taking off. Morris had been taught in workshops at the Sidmouth Folk Festival since 1967, but in 1971, women were barred from the beginners' workshop as 'a distraction'. After protests, Roy Dommett, who was running the advanced workshop, arranged an impromptu session on North-West dances, and the next years saw official workshops for 'Women's ritual dancing' and 'Ladies morris'.

Women who had taken part in the workshops began to found their own teams. One of these was Betty Reynolds, whose husband, 'Tubby', had started the Folk Dance Society at Bath University in 1967. The women of the Society were eager to take up morris, and Bath City Women was founded. They were among other interested women at the 'Albert's Out of Town' festival organised by Tubby and Betty at the University in the spring of 1973, and a workshop was organised, teaching the Wheatley tradition.

The women who attended had also been founding teams, including in Cardiff, Cheltenham and Oxford University, and they jumped at the chance to get together again in November 1973, at "A Day of Traditional Festivity" at the Cheltenham Art College, organised by England's Glory. It was at this event that Betty Reynolds and the Bath City Women took on the challenge of organising an association for female morris sides, to act as a channel of communication between sides, provide mutual support and facilitate the exchange of information, especially dance and music notation.

During the discussion on a potential name, it was suggested, as a joke,

Early WMF Members

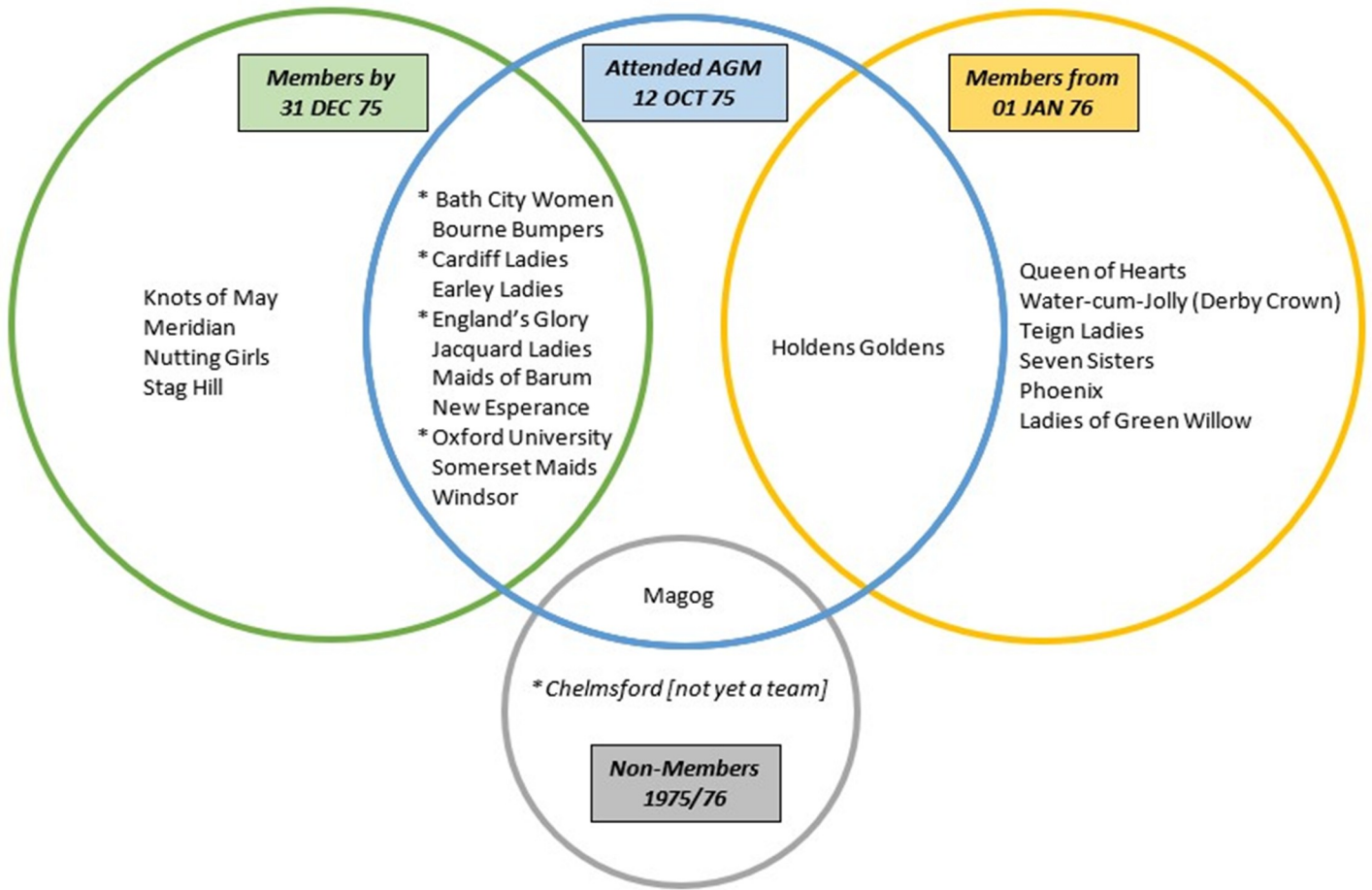


Diagram provided by Val Parker. (*) denotes teams who attended the initial meeting in November 1973 at Cheltenham Art College.

that it should be the Women's Morris Federation, with the acronym "WoMF", which sounded rather comical when said aloud. The suggestion was accepted, but the acronym came to be written as 'WMF'.

Progress was hampered by the fact that Bath City was a university side, members being distracted by industrial placements, university vacations and exams, but there was good response to publicity, and a weekend event incorporating the Inaugural Meeting of the Women's Morris Federation was held in Bath, based at the University, in October 1975.

Founders of the Federation

The founders, Bath City Women, Cardiff Ladies, England's Glory and Oxford University Ladies Ritual Dancing Club, were joined at that inaugural meeting by Bourne Bumpers (Bournemouth), Earley Ladies (Reading University), Jacquard Ladies (Nottingham), Maids of Barum (Barnstaple, Devon), New Esperance (London), Somerset Maids (Bath) and The Merry Wives of Windsor (later Windsor Morris), all of whom joined the Federation by the end of the year, and two teams, Holden Goldens

(Wolverhampton) and Magog (Horsham, Sussex), who joined later.

Teams who did not attend the meeting but joined in 1975 were Knots of May (Lewes, Sussex), Blackheath Ladies (later Meridian, from Blackheath, Kent), The Nutting Girls (Swansea) and Stag Hill Ladies (Surrey University). A contingent from Chelmsford had also been at the 1973 meeting at Cheltenham, but hadn't formed a side at the time, and Chelmsford Morris didn't join WMF until 1981 – as a mixed side.

Not just for women

The concept of a single-sex Federation very soon began to seem inappropriate. Many women's sides had male musicians, and the number of mixed teams was increasing, but the proposal at the AGM in 1977 that the constitution should drop any references to 'women' was introduced by teams who simply felt that gender was irrelevant – it was the dancing that mattered. However, there were concerns about the hostility to WMF from men in the morris world. A threat had been voiced that if membership was open to men's teams, a lot of them

could join and destroy it. It was only gradually that the Federation opened up, in 1980, after long and often heated argument, to mixed and joint teams and in 1982 to men's – although the name was changed to 'Morris Federation' only in 1983!

The Federation's work

These were not the only issues to cause contention at early meetings. Some members wanted the Federation to insist on a high standard of performance as a condition of membership, but the prevailing view was that WMF should not dictate how members should conduct themselves. The Committee was keen to encourage high standards, however, organising a vibrant programme of workshops including on the basics of dancing, on performance and on the role of the foreman as well as 'instructionals' on particular dances. They also joined with Open Morris to support Roy Dommett's series of Advanced Cotswold Weekends, which ran from 1986 to 2003.

The Committee has always responded to enquiries from the press, and to reports which give an inaccurate or misleading picture of morris. As folk became very 'uncool' in the 1980s and 1990s, the Committee sought ways of improving the image of morris. Things got a lot more political in the 1990s when the government was planning to 'abolish May Day' by moving the May Day Bank Holiday to some other time of year. The Committee was involved in organising protests including lobbying Parliament and the delivery of a petition to the Prime Minister by a Jack-in-the-Green and a chimney sweep, among others.

The Licensing Act

Then in the first years of the 21st century a new Public Entertainment Licensing Act was under discussion, which would have required applying for a licence for every public performance. The three morris organisations worked together to get morris 'and related activities' exempted from the Act, and the victory was celebrated at a massed dance-out in Trafalgar Square in London on 2nd October 2003.

The birth of the Joint Morris Organisations

The campaign against the Licensing Act was not the first time the Federation had worked closely with the Morris Ring and Open Morris. Relations between the three had been improving in the later years of the 20th century, the committees finding they had many aims in common. The three organisations had held regular joint meetings from 1987, worked together on a survey of morris injuries, and jointly organised four conferences in the 1990s. The meetings are now formalised as the 'Joint Morris Organisations', and a National Day of Dance is organised every year.

Lockdowns and cessation of full-face black makeup

The lockdowns of 2020-2021 to control the spread of Covid-19 meant that no public performances were possible, nor practising together until restrictions were gradually lifted, from the spring of 2021. The Federation's Health and Safety Advisor put together advice for the teams desperate to start dancing together as soon as possible. As some compensation for the lack of a normal morris life, a busy programme of talks and workshops on 'Zoom' was organised, which of course meant that the Federation was reaching out internationally. The success of the programme encouraged the committee to continue it after the lockdowns were over. Between November 2020 and December 2024, the Federation ran 84 online events.

The re-ignition of 'Black Lives Matter' after the killing of George Floyd in the USA in May 2020 lent urgency to the need to steer the Federation through the process of making blackened faces an inappropriate costume for member teams. The questionable origins of the practice were little known, but most teams who wore full face black makeup could see that it could be taken to be offensive, and changed to using masks or other colours.

Celebrating 50 years

As the Federation celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2025, morris dancers are in a very different world from that challenged by its founders. The majority of teams now dance other traditions than Cotswold, and the number of women dancing is now equal to the number of men. The need to improve the public image of the morris population remains, as the average age of participants continues to increase.

In 2023 the Federation gained a grant from Arts Council England to take morris into selected schools, and is hoping to build on the very positive outcomes. Here's to the next 50 years!



The Original Women's Morris Federation Teams



Bourne Bumpers



Magog



Phoenix



Ladies of Green Willow



Stag Hill Ladies



Somerset Maids



Cardiff Ladies



Teign Ladies



Earley Ladies



Maids of Barum



England's Glory



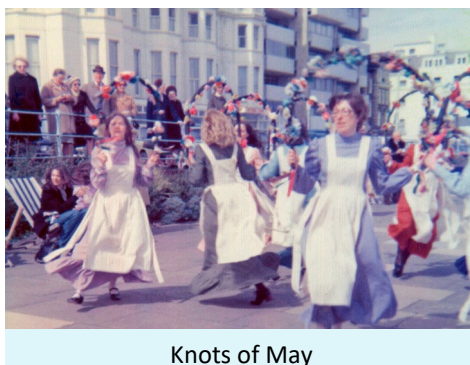
Bath City Women



Windsor Morris



Holdens Goldens



Knots of May



Jacquard Ladies



Oxford University Ladies Ritual



Meridian



Nutting Girls



Water Cum Jolly (later Derby Crown)



New Esperance

A blast from the past...

As part of our 50th celebrations, all past Officers of the Morris Fed were invited to join us for a meal at our celebratory days of dance. We had a great turnout for our Sheffield weekend, with Sally Wearing and Val Parker both showing up in very appropriate attire - Sally adorned with every badge she was given as an Officer and Honorary Life Member, and Val in her original Women's Morris Federation branded jumper. The current Committee extend our thanks to all past and present Officers and volunteers who helped shape the Morris Federation into the strong organisation we are today. Photos by Eliza Rusell.



Notation Nattering

Written by Archive Officer* Jerry West. *Notation and Archive Officer roles were combined in March 2026

For this 50th Anniversary issue, I have chosen to highlight these notes from the Notation Library:

ASHTON PROCESSIONAL

These notes were taken by Barbara Butler at an instructional given by Derick Frome and Peter Fox to the Women's Morris Federation in Cardiff 1974.

Music: The Girl I left Behind Me, Rushcart Lads.

Set: For any multiple of 4 in column formation, i.e. a longways set, each dancer carrying two sticks decorated with ribbons or streamers.

Stepping: Marching and N.W. polka

Hands: Held above shoulders at ear height so that the sticks (each held in the middle) are horizontal and pointing forward and back. Otherwise as given below.

Astute readers will immediately notice that although the notes reference the Women's Morris Federation (as the Morris Federation was previously known), the date – 1974 – raises immediate questions. Surely the WMF was formed in 1975?

Well yes, the WMF was officially inaugurated in October 1975 at its first AGM but the first conversations between what were to become the founding teams had started in 1973 and as these notes show, the nascent Federation had already started to deliver on its remit to provide access to dance instruction and notation in 1974.

Workshops for 'Women's ritual dancing' and 'Ladies Morris' had been held at Sidmouth Folk Festival from 1972 but as these titles suggest, there was often self-censorship in the choice of dances taught, limited to those considered 'suitable' for female dancers and teams. Suitability was determined sometimes by the nature of the steps (for example, Cotswold morris 'galleys' were considered unladylike by some or simply impracticable, especially when dancing in skirts or long dresses), sometimes by the (un-)popularity of the tradition (i.e. avoiding those most commonly danced by extant men's sides) and sometimes by reference to female participation in history (encouraging the teaching of the North-West 'clog' dances of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, for instance).

Early Federation workshops were not immune to these considerations, but these constraints quickly evaporated with the support of the (mostly male) workshop leaders.

We must thank dancers such as Derick Frome and Peter Fox, above, and also David Robinson, Trefor Owen, 'Tubby' Reynolds, Roy Dommett and others who taught all-comers at festival workshops and WMF/MF instructionals. But it was the Federation officers like Barbara Butler, and later Sue Swift, who helped arrange workshops across the country for increasing numbers of women's (and later mixed and male) teams, evangelising new dances and publishing notation for all to use. They too deserve our heartfelt thanks, without them we would not have the richness and variety of today's dance traditions.

PS: If you want to dance the Ashton Processional, you can find the notes by searching the Notation Library at www.morrisfed.org.uk/notation-library/search



Lending Library

Did you know that The Morris Federation has a lending library, with over 200 books, leaflets and DVDs to borrow? Items are available on free loan to all Morris Federation Members, but we do ask you to cover postage costs.

For more information, and to see what is available for you to borrow, please check out the link below!

www.morrisfed.org.uk/resources/archive-and-library/library-books/

Windsor Morris are 50!



Windsor Morris with guests Great Western, Sheffield City, Chinewrde, and Seven Champions outside Windsor Castle during their 50th anniversary weekend. Photo by Owain Boorman. Article written by Shirley Dixon and Kate Rowland of Windsor Morris.

2024-25 season was a big anniversary for Windsor Morris. It was 50 years ago when we first dared to enter the male-dominated world of morris dancing. We've rattled a few cages since then!

Hard to believe that we started off in flowered skirts and 'character shoes' (with a small heel) as 'The Merry Wives of Windsor'. Fortunately, our founders, Jenny Joyce and Alan Whear, saw the magnificent performances of Gloucestershire Old Spot Morris at Sidmouth Folk Festival in 1975, and returned to the team with a vision of morris as a breath-taking and entertaining spectacle.

We chose to concentrate on two traditions only, rather than trying to present a selection of dances from many, and we worked hard at not only strong dancing but every detail of performance. The third member of our triumvirate of founders, Cherry Simmons, became our fool. It was unusual for a women's team to have their own announcer, and, now sporting a top hat in the shape of Windsor Castle's Round Tower, Cherry is an important part of the team's public face.

Badby and Brackley were the traditions we chose, since they were not danced by many other teams. We felt able to make those 'obscure' traditions our own without too much risk of offending the morris establishment. We amend dances, and invent new ones, constantly – another concept that was anathema to morris

traditionalists. Since 2007 we have a whole invented tradition in our repertoire, based on 'Minneapolis-on-Charles'.

We had changed the kit to plain skirts and flat shoes, but in 1978 we made the change to trousers, which allow the intricate stepping of Cotswold morris to be seen. Further fury from dyed-in-the-wool morris fogeys! Women were supposed to be pretty and delicate and to know their place!

We run two or three days of dance per year, opportunities to perform in Windsor with our favourite teams. 1981 saw our first trip abroad, to the Marlboro Ale in Vermont, the premier morris gathering in North America, after which we visited New York and Boston, hosted by women's teams Ring O'Bells and Muddy River. We were amazed by the sheer enthusiasm of American dancers and audiences, and have attended Marlboro five further times since then (once including a visit to the London, Ontario, Ale). In 1985 we represented England at a Youth Festival in Jamaica, and we've also danced at international festivals in Belgium and Normandy, and in 2006 had a 'European tour' when we stayed with Ferrette Morris in Alsace, dancing in three countries in one day!

We always get a team together to dance on the Esplanade at the Sidmouth Folk Festival. We danced on



Two photos of Windsor Morris, exactly 50 years apart!

Top - Windsor Morris in their original kit at The Cock and Rabbit Inn on Saturday, 17th May 1975, with Beth Neill on the front left.

Bottom - Windsor Morris return to The Cock and Rabbit Inn on Saturday 17th May 2025, with Beth Neill once again on the front left.

the Arena in 1977, but for many years after that women's teams were cold-shouldered, and it wasn't until 1993 that we were invited to perform for the whole week of the Festival. In 1988 we hosted a Saturday evening fancy-dress party on the Esplanade, which became an annual event for the next 10 years. Our guests would compete to make the most dramatic entrance. At 1989's 'Titanic'-themed event, Great Western came as the iceberg, and for the 1995 'Vikings' party, Berkshire Bedlam rowed down the Esplanade in a longship.

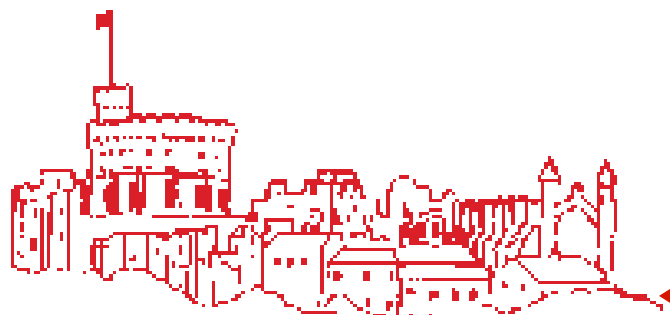
This year, we've gone all out to celebrate our 50th season. Gold-themed parties have been held wherever we've travelled, but we've also marked the milestone with a few extra-special events.

In the Autumn, we held a reunion party for members past and present. This was a lovely opportunity to bring out some of our scrapbooks to share memories and stories. In true Windsor style, there was a quiz with categories on gold, on the 1970s, and on the team's history. Some of our former members tested to see whether they could still remember the dances.

One of the most special moments came on Saturday 17th May when we returned to The Cock and Rabbit Inn, in Great Missenden, where Windsor had our first ever dance out on Saturday 17th May 1975. This first dance out was to celebrate a wedding, and the bride and groom were even able to join us as they celebrated *their* 50th wedding anniversary. It was lovely for us all to attend and reminisce, but extra-special for Beth and Cherry who were present at both occasions. Beth was photographed once more dancing in the same position (front left) 50 years on.

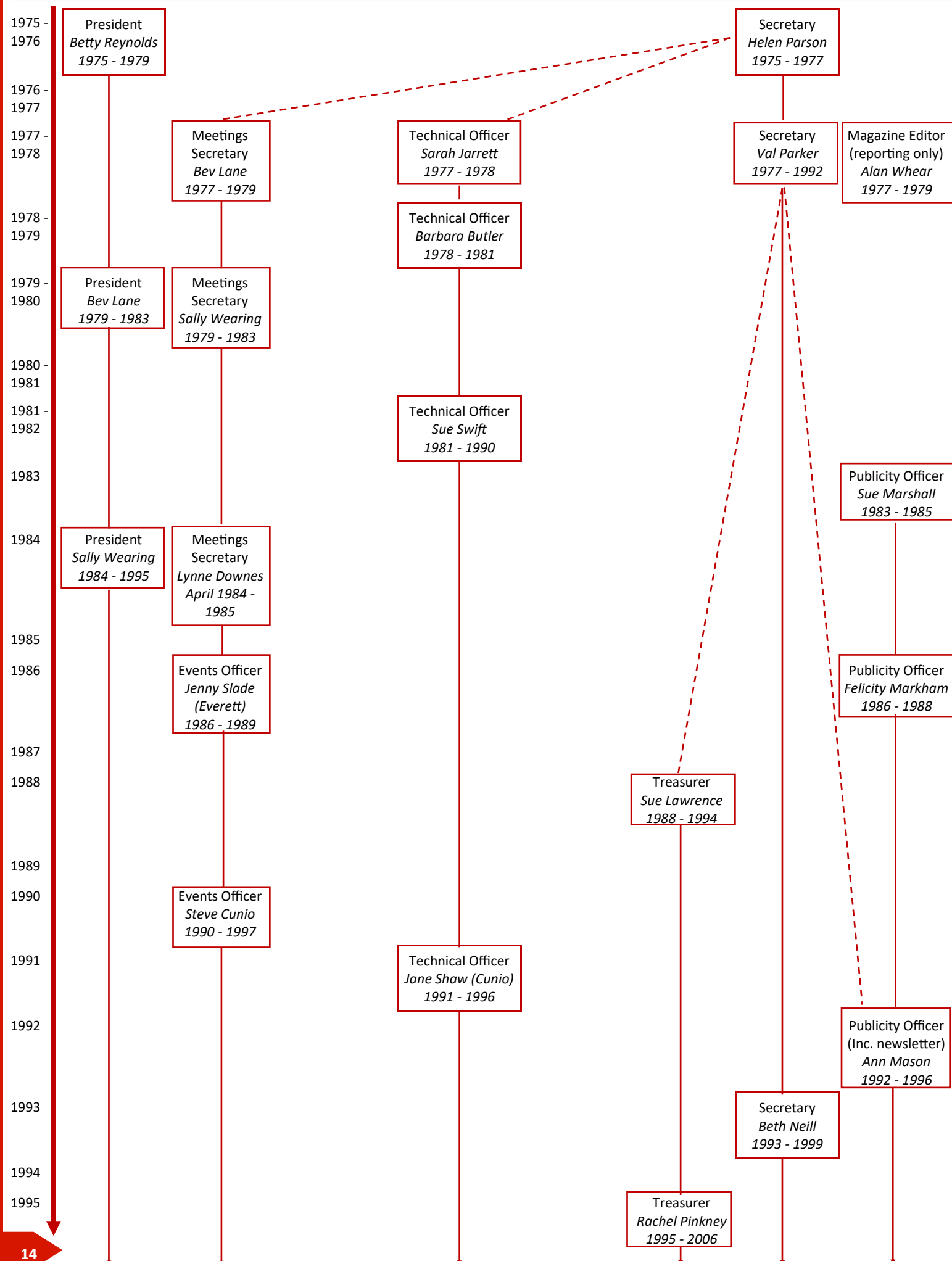
Finally, we held a weekend celebration in July for some guest teams we have enjoyed spending time with over the last 50 years – Great Western, Sheffield City, Chinewrde and Seven Champions. On Saturday morning, we travelled into Windsor where we danced at some of our favourite locations. We were able to arrange a short procession along the Long Walk finishing in front of the castle for a commemorative photo. The evening was full of fun and we enjoyed sharing and watching skits on the theme of 'Through the Decades' with each team preparing entertainment based on a different decade from the 1970s to the 2020s. We were serenaded by both Great Western and Sheffield City with amazing parody songs – we enjoyed Sheffield's so much we reprised it at our shared 'Meet the Team' event in Sidmouth. Chinewrde performed a series of 90s dance crazes and we also got an insight into Seven Champions' training in not smiling. We wrapped up the weekend on Sunday with a final bit of dancing in the town centre of Newbury before Sheffield City beautifully led us in a moving rendition of *Rolling Home* – a perfect end to the celebrations.

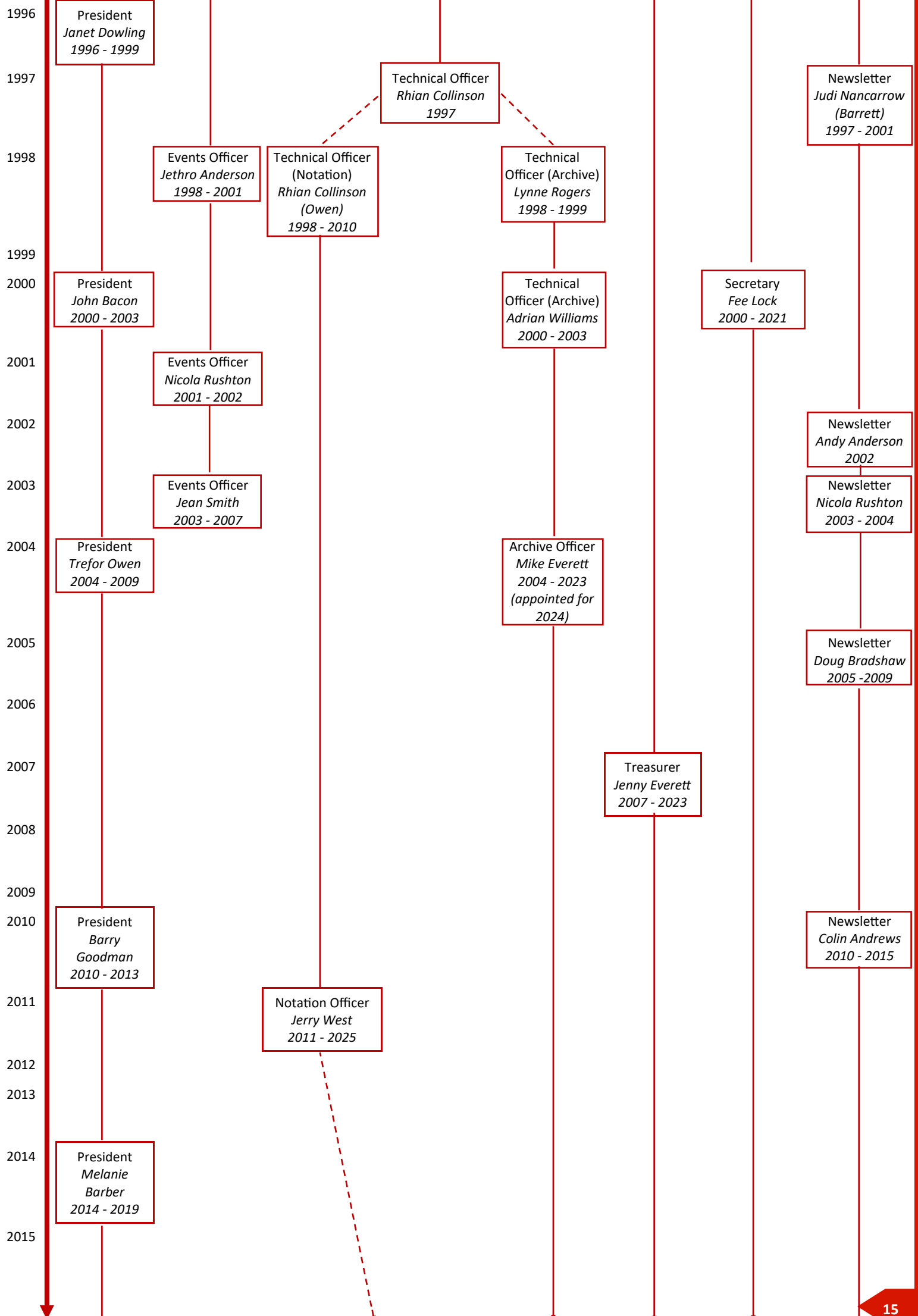
To all the teams and friends who've danced, laughed and celebrated over our 50 seasons, we thank you! We look forward to making more memories with friends old and new as the team continues. Here's to the next 50 years. We're only just getting started.

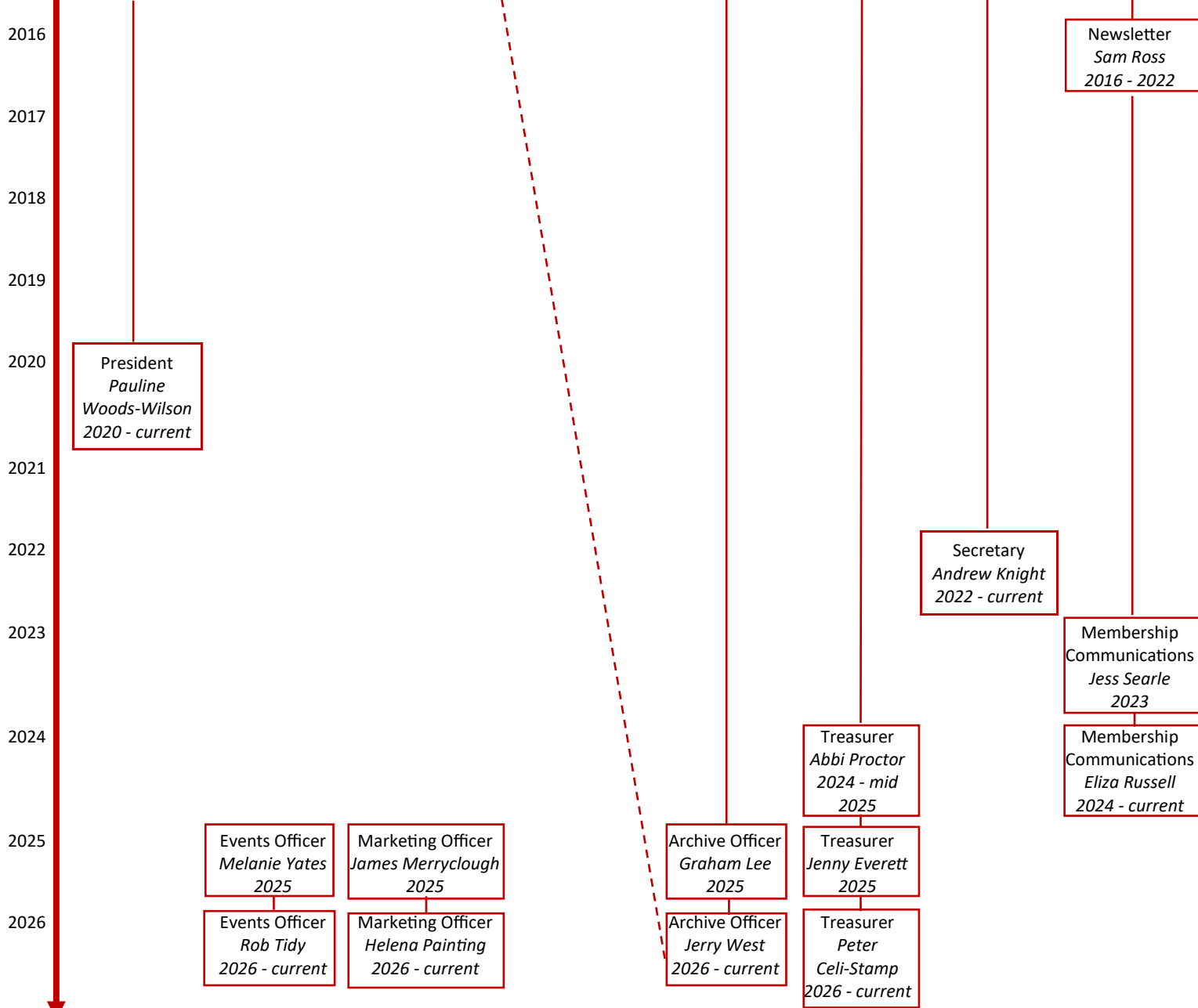


The Morris Federation Committee - 50 years of volunteers

Our committee has seen many developments and changes in the last 50 years, and without the people who have given their time free of charge, we would not be the organisation we are today. (Information for the years 1975 - 2000 provided by Val Parker)







The Future

Alongside the elected Committee, depicted in the family tree above, The Morris Federation has been supported by a whole host of additional volunteers, advisors and co-optees over the years who we feel are deserving of a mention. These people put in just as much work as the elected members of the Committee, and are an integral part of the day-to-day running of the organisation.

Notable individuals include:

Insurance Officer - Michael Stimpson (2001 - 2025, 2026 - current) and Chris Dent (2025 - 2026)

Licensing Act Advisor - John Bacon (2004 - 2019)

Health and Safety Advisor - Sally Wearing (2014 - current)

For a full list of past and current elected officers and other volunteers, please see our webpage at www.morrisfed.org.uk/about/committee/

50th Anniversary Badges

If you were lucky enough to get to one of our 50th Anniversary events, you would have found commemorative Morris Federation badges on sale. Made of enamel on metal, and in five different colours, we have one to match every kit!

Although limited edition, we still do have some in stock for those folks who missed out. These can be purchased for the grand sum of just £1 per badge via our website www.morrisfed.org.uk/merchandise/badges



"Quacking" EFDSS Gold Award for President Pauline Woods-Wilson on 50th Anniversary of Morris Fed

The Morris Federation Committee are extremely proud to announce that in 2025, Morris Federation President Pauline Woods-Wilson was nominated for, and awarded, an EFDSS Gold Badge Award for unique and outstanding contributions to the folk and morris worlds.

As one of only two Morris Federation Presidents to receive such an award, and the only female President to do so, we are extremely proud of her.

In her time as President, Pauline has achieved some unique and incredible things. She was the brain behind taking morris online during the COVID pandemic, successfully organising and running a programme of workshops via Zoom to keep the morris population, of not just the UK but also the wider world, dancing during

lockdown. She also organised a successful Arts Council bid which saw morris and folk being taught in schools within 3 levelling-up areas of the UK, bringing our traditions to a variety of children from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

EFDSS published the following announcement in their EDS magazine –

"Pauline, President of The Morris Federation from January 2020, has been modernising and enlarging the activities and profile of the organization by way of online workshops and talks for the wider morris world (particularly during COVID) and, more recently, an Arts Council funded schools' project. A morris dancer from age 19, and former dance teacher of Windsor Morris."

When asked how she felt when she found out she was getting a Gold Badge, Pauline said

"Initially I was shocked, then very honoured, and then left wondering who had nominated me, and why. As only the second Morris Federation President to receive a Gold award, alongside John Bacon in 2018, I was thrilled to receive such recognition for not only myself but also the Morris Federation by an external organisation. Being the only female President to be awarded an EFDSS Gold Badge, and the fact it is happening during the 50th anniversary of The Women's Morris Federation makes it even more special to me."

Pauline was due to receive her Gold Badge at the Morris Federation AGM in Sheffield on Saturday 27th September 2025, but Michael Heaney, who was to have presented the badge, was unfortunately unable to attend. A gold rubber ducky (which was to be a personal gift given by Eliza at the next day's committee meeting) was instead presented by Frank Lee as an interim measure, and the citation still read out by Eliza Russell, alongside a slideshow of photographs from Pauline's long history of morris dancing.

Pauline's Gold Badge was later presented to her at a Chiltern Hundreds North West Clog Morris practice in Bushey, on Sunday, 26th January 2026 by Mike Heaney.

You can find a copy of the full citation, along with the EFDSS magazine article and videos of the award ceremony, on our dedicated web page at

www.morrisfed.org.uk/about/other-awards/pauline-woods-wilson/

CONGRATULATIONS, PAULINE, WE ARE ALL SO PROUD OF YOU!



Top - Pauline with Mike Heaney and Eliza Russell in Watford, Jan 2026, following the presentation of her badge. Photo by Will Allen.



Left - The gold duck proudly shows off his gold badge! Photo by Pauline Woods-Wilson.

Bottom - Pauline with Frank Lee, Eliza Russell and gold duck. Photo by Dennis Taylor.



Armitage 50th Anniversary Day of Dance

Submitted by Cath Hughes of Three Spires Morris

On 2 March 2025 Beggars Oak Clog hosted a 'Day of Let's Dance' in Armitage, Staffordshire. The day was a dual celebration, commemorating the Morris Federation's 50th anniversary and also supporting Angela Rippon's national 'Let's Dance' campaign.

Three Spires Morris were lucky enough to be invited and, as we like to add something new and a little bit different to our calendar each year, alongside our favourite festivals and events, we were really pleased to be able to take part. For our 'something a bit different' in 2025, the day definitely delivered. It was a real celebration and appreciation of dance and music and also of colour and costume with groups performing a variety of dance styles including folk, north-west morris, cotswold morris, molly, clog, line and belly dancing. The atmosphere was welcoming and supportive and the day made you feel proud to be a dancer and part of the wider dancing

community. When we went wrong (surely not!) while performing a dance we should really know by now, the spectators were on our side and we felt like we were amongst friends. As well as appreciating the different styles of dance there was the opportunity to have a go. We had great fun joining in with other groups and trying out their dances (although our line dancing prowess left much room for improvement). We also enjoyed sharing one of our favourite dances with others. Our favourite photograph from the day (see below) was shared with us on Facebook by Mike Everett and shows other dancers joining in Grenoside, our go-to audience participation dance.

A huge thank you to Beggars Oak Clog for being inspired to host this day and for the huge amount of organisation that went into it. It all paid off and was definitely one of our highlights of 2025.

Beggars' Oak Day of Let's Dance
Sunday 2nd March 2025 (11:00-16:00)

In recognition of The Morris Federation's 50th Anniversary and Angela Rippon's "Let's Dance" initiative to get the nation dancing following her appearance on Strictly Come Dancing and on the BBC's One Show

The programme will include various dance genres with the emphasis being on a celebration of music, dance and FUN!

This is your chance to 'come and have a go' or just sit back, watch and enjoy some refreshments from our licenced bar or Café

VENUE
 Armitage with Handsacre Village Hall,
 Shropshire Brook Road, Armitage,
 Staffordshire WS15 4UZ

Entry donations would be welcome with a minimum suggestion of £1.00

This is a not for profit event and if we more than cover our costs the excess will be donated to St Giles Hospice

For further enquiries: SaundraSlater4@gmail.com 07496 611113



Left - Publicity poster for the Armitage Day of Dance, designed by Beggar's Oak Clog.

Top right- Three Spires Morris leading a mass dance at the Armitage day of dance.

Bottom right - Beggar's Oak Clog at the Armitage day of dance. Photos by Mike Everett

Exmouth 50th Anniversary Day of Dance

Submitted by Andy Meyer of Grimspound Border Morris

COME AND CELEBRATE
50 YEARS OF THE MORRIS FEDERATION
 WITH A
DAY OF DANCE
 EXMOUTH



OVER 40 MORRIS SIDES FROM AROUND THE UK PERFORMING!

SATURDAY
19TH JULY FROM 10 AM





Top - Publicity poster for the Exmouth Day of Dance, designed by Grimspound Border morris.

Bottom - The Morris Federation banner on Exmouth beach. Photo by Eliza Russell.



In the autumn of 2024, Grimspound received an invitation to host a Day of Dance as part of the Celebrations of 50 years of the Morris Federation. This was to be one of a number of regional events.

This invitation came to Grimspound, as a side which had seen something of a renaissance in recent years: from a low point of barely six dancers ten years ago, we had grown to 32 dancers and 10 musicians in our 30th anniversary year of 2024.

Why were Grimspound offered this invitation? Part of the answer would have been that we have had the experience of a number of years of successfully organising our own Day of Dance at Bovey Tracy. The Bovey Day of Dance typically includes about 14 sides. Surely it would be a simple matter to scale up to hosting nearly 40 sides?

A sub-committee was convened, and suitable locations for a large event were considered.

Exmouth was the favourite, not least on the grounds that other towns with long seafronts (Teignmouth, Sidmouth, Lyme Regis) were already the venue of large Morris events. Exmouth also had rail access, and (we hoped) sufficient parking.

At one point in the planning, we considered

whether it would be worth attempting a Guinness World Record for the largest number of Morris Dancers performing together, but this idea was dropped, once we started to understand the logistics involved (fenced-off area, numbered wrist-bands, counting people in and out, lots of waiting around...).

Liaison with the town council was necessary, and there was a positive response from that quarter, including advice about availability of dates. It became evident that the 19th of July would be the choice. A lot of behind-the-scenes work was undertaken by a few hard-working individuals (they know who they are) who drew on the experience of the Bovey Day of Dance to guide them as to what needed to be done.

Locations of dance spots around the town were identified and allocated to the rota of sides. The aim was to have a contrasting selection of dance styles at each location / occasion. Publicity material was produced, and disseminated both online and with traditional paper fliers.

Information was sent out to participating sides, including "What Three Words" and global positioning co-ordinates for each dance location. The locations themselves were

marked out by cardboard placards on the ground. What could possibly go wrong?

The day came. There had been weeks of hot dry weather, so at least there would be no problems of slipping on wet grass. People started to arrive, and coffee and breakfast was consumed (plus rescue remedy for nerves). Sides found their own way to dance spots, and just got on with doing what they do best! There were plenty of people (both local and visitors) who enjoyed watching the show. For each side, the day was divided into three dance spots and a lunch break. Local pubs and cafes did good business.

The finale of the day came with a mass gathering at the

Strand: a big triangular paved area in the town centre. With a minimum of "cat herding", enough people spread themselves over the space to enjoy "Tinnars Rabbits", the most appropriate dance for an event hosted by Grimspound. This is a dance originally composed by the founder members of the side 30 years ago, and has since become a favourite with sides all around the world and is danced by at least 106 other sides (according to the Morris Dance Database!).

I have been told that many people stayed on to enjoy an evening of music sessions and further impromptu dancing. Thanks to everyone who came along and helped to make the day such a success!

Exmouth 50th - In Pictures

Thank you to Alan Courtney (Dorset Morri'arty) for the following photos of a wonderful day.



Alan Courtney with Grim Bear



Grimspound Border Morris



Mr Wilkins Shilling



Wild Moon



Heaps Morris



Rag Morris



Sidmouth Steppers



Worthing Larks



Enigma Border Morris



Hobos



Great Western



Aurora Appalachian



Downes on Tour Women



Newton Bushel Morris



The Tattered Court



Otter Morris



Holly Cope Molly



OBJ Morris



Glory of the West



Carn Brea Morris



Kittiwake Border Morris



Isambard's Gasket Rats



Tywardreath Morris



Bootstrap Border



Catseye



Black Bess Border Morris



Downes on Tour Men



Dr Turberville's



Pigsty Morris



Lodestone Border Morris



Dartmoor Border Morris



The Barrel Border Morris



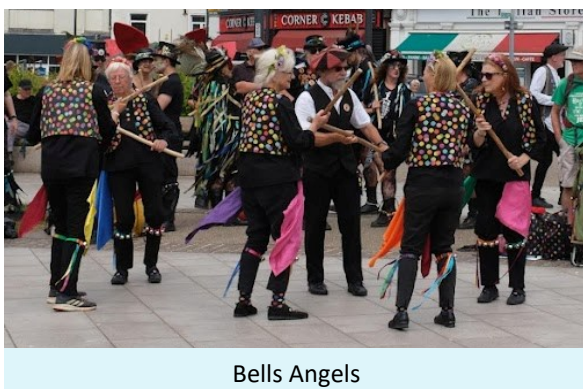
Tinnors Morris



City Clickers



Pensans Morris



Bells Angels



Treacle Eater Clog



Bradninch Millers Morris



Green Willow Clog Dancers



Some teams even came with beasts



A Grim(bear) swim



Foolishly Great Western

Fed's 50th on ITV News

The Morris Federation Committee were contacted in the summer by James Webster of ITV News, who wanted to meet with some of our teams and capture footage at our Exmouth Anniversary Day of Dance, for a news piece dedicated to celebrating 50 years of the Morris Federation, and highlighting just what is so great about being a part of the morris community.

The footage and interviews captured at our Exmouth Anniversary Day of Dance were then used alongside footage from visits with teams from across the country, and as well as making the national broadcast, many regional variations were recorded and broadcast also. You can find the main ITV story, and watch the

national ITV News broadcast on the ITV website by going to www.itv.com/watch/news/morris-dancers-gather-to-celebrate-50-years-of-the-morris-federation/r5stk51



Member Comms Officer and FedExtra Editor Eliza Russell captured this selfie with James Webster of ITV news following an interview at our Exmouth Anniversary Day of Dance.

FURRY FED'S 50TH FRIENDS



It's going to the dogs! Official Morris Dog Riley travelled all the way from West Sussex to Exmouth in order to celebrate 50 years of The Morris Federation. Photo by Eliza Russell.

Sheffield 50th Anniversary AGM weekend in pictures

Thank you to BarryP/www.pixelsonapage for the photos, except where noted.

AGM 2025 - Sheffield

Sat 27th September 2025 at 16:00



Mortimer's Morris.



Sutton Masque.



Knights of King Ina.



Feet First Appalachian.



Slubbing Billy's North West Morris



Lizzie Dripping.



Invited guest of the Committee, and representative of the Morris Ring, Lewis Elliot, arrived in questionably festive attire for an AGM.

Photo by Eliza Russell



Harry Taylor's Morris flying high.



Folk Factory do rapper. Photo by Eliza Russell.



Badge presentation to Pecsætan Morris.



Badge presentation to Five Rivers.



Badge presentation to Sheffield City Morris.



AGM audience approval.



"Well this is rather quacking!"
Pauline receives a gold duck award.



Jenny Everett shows off her Morris Fed badge collection on specially-made sash.



Jenny and Mike Everett are presented with updated Past Officer badges, after finding themselves unexpectedly serving more time on the Committee.

The Sheffield AGM meeting was one of many presentations.... Badges were presented to our host teams as a gesture of thanks, Jenny and Mike Everett received updated Past Officer badges, following their additional time on the Committee, and to round it off, Pauline received a Gold Duck Award. (See page 17 for more details)



Start as you mean to go on. Pauline acquaints herself with the local beers upon arrival on Friday night.



Only the freshest coffee will do for the President, and Dennis willingly obliges.



Jenny receives a gift of thanks from the Committee after temporarily taking on the role of Treasurer mid-year.



Drew is presented with a thank you gift for all his hard work. Lin plans to borrow it.



Peter celebrates his new role of Treasurer, despite nobody being able to work out why...



Drew is quick to hand over the Events Officer badge to Rob so that he can make a start on the job!



At the end of Sunday's long Committee meeting, the last thing we wanted to do is smile at a camera, but we mostly did anyway.



A drink courtesy of the Morris Federation for all Officers past and present at our Saturday night celebratory meal.



"You've been dancing for 46 years - it's about time you learned how to dress yourself!"

Behind the scenes pictures provided by Eliza Russell.

IT Top Tips

Written by Brian Kelly, IT Advice and Support Co-optee

During the Morris Federation's 50th anniversary year we focussed on approaches to enhancing the online visibility of our sides, with the aims of supporting recruitment and raising the profile of morris and other traditional dance styles, especially for new audiences.

Videos

The "50 videos; 50 sides; 50th anniversary" set of short videos continued to be published every week and we started a new collection of "Spotlight on..." videos. The videos were published weekly from the Morris Federation's Facebook account, with a collection of the videos shared on the "How Many Morris Dancers.." Facebook group each month.

Reaching New Audiences

But this amounted to little more than sharing with existing morris dancers! In order to reach new audiences, there was a need to use additional digital channels. To help achieve this goal the videos were also shared on our Instagram, TikTok, and Bluesky

accounts. The viewing statistics showed that TikTok is popular with younger viewers (over 40% are under 35, with just 25% aged 55+) which contrasts sharply with figures for Facebook.

The videos were designed so that they provided about 30 seconds of dance clips, but also provided a "call to action" so those interested in finding out more could search using the featured side's hashtag. And for those who continued watching, a further call to action explained how a Google search for "#MorrisTeamFinder" would find details for all Morris Federation's sides. But what would they find when they started searching?

Searching

Further developments to the Morris Federation's Teamfinder service had been made which include additional 'structured' fields (Year Founded, Location, Kit), to complement the rich profiles.

The ideal profile would provide a short opening paragraph, which

makes sense in isolation. Eg: "XXX Morris are a mixed border morris side based in town, county", followed by paragraphs which may then describe the history of the side, dances performed, how to join, etc.

What should my Side do? - Enhance your Teamfinder Profile

Currently over 50% of sides have a rich Teamfinder profile, with over a third including a hashtag in their listing. To see how this can help, try searching (in Google, Facebook, YouTube etc.) for sides with a hashtag, such as #wyldmorris or #altonmorris. These hashtags can be included in a side's publicity material, not only to help people find out about the side but also to encourage anyone taking a photo or video of your side to use the tag if the resources are shared online.

You may be inspired by the profiles you find - but we also suggest you make your own profile unique by highlighting the characteristics which make your side different from others!

FedExtra Back Issues

If you just love FedExtra and want more, or would like to check out an article your team was in, you may be pleased to learn that you can now access past editions for free on our website... And you don't have to be a member to do so! Please go to www.morrisfed.org.uk/fedextra/ to get your extra fill of FedExtra today!



AI Overview

Northgate Rapper is a traditional men's sword dancing team based in Bath, named after the now-demised Northgate Brewery, and known for their energetic performances and crowd-pleasing dances, including somersaults.

Here's a more detailed look at Northgate Rapper:

- Location:** Bath, and often performing in Bristol.
- Founded:** 1991.
- Tradition:** They perform a traditional northeastern style of rapper dancing, evolving from the Kingsmen dance, but with their own unique elements.

Learn more

Northgate Rapper dance "Ghost" at Bromyard Folk Festival 2024
17 Sept 2024 — Northgate Rapper dance "Ghost..."

YouTube · Morris Dancers and traditional dancers UK

Northgate Rapper (About) - The Morris Federation
In brief * Side name: Northgate Rapper. * #Location: Bath, Bristol. * #Founded: 1991. * Side #hashtag (use for searching or taggi...
The Morris Federation

Northgate Rapper - Shrewsbury Folk Festival
Northgate Rapper, those oh-so boisterous boys from Bath, will bestow beautiful blade-based boogie combining fast and frenetic foot...
Shrewsbury Folk Festival

A screenshot taken of the response to Google prompt "Tell me about Northgate Rapper".



Morris Federation Merchandise and Bells Shop



www.morrisfed.org.uk/merchandise/

Did you know that, alongside our Lending Library and vast selection of free online resources, the Morris Federation also has an online shop where you can purchase bells, badges, books, and much more?

Bells

We sell bells in a selection of sizes, in both brass and nickel plated finish, and also offer a discount to members of Morris Federation teams. Please see the table to the right for details of sizes and prices.

Due to supply problems with our previous supplier, we are stocking some slightly different bells from an alternative supplier. They are still 2-piece bells, but have a larger fixing loop, and a smaller clapper. See image top right of page.

Bells can be ordered via our website www.morrisfed.org.uk/merchandise/bells/ where you can find more details and download an order form.

Size	Style of bell	Price per bell (Members)	Price per bell (Non-Members)
¾"	NEW STYLE brass	£0.45	£0.60
¾"	Old style nickel	£0.75	£0.90
⅞"	Old style brass / nickel	£0.90	£1.05
1"	NEW STYLE brass / nickel	£0.90	£1.05
1 ⅛"	NEW STYLE brass / nickel	£1.25	£1.40
1 ¼"	Old style brass / nickel	£1.40	£1.55

Bells – Postage and Packing	
up to 100 bells any size	£5.60
up to 200 bells any size except 1 ¼"	£5.60
up to 200 bells 1 ¼"	£11.20
<i>If ordering just a few bells or more than 200, please contact us for a price.</i>	

If you have any used bells of any colour – in good condition – in smaller sizes suitable for our primary schools projects, please contact us at www.morrisfed.org.uk/education/equipment/.

Closing Thoughts

Wow, what a year it has been!

When I started compiling this FedExtra, I didn't realise just how much content I would have to go into it. The morris sure know how to celebrate in style!

Thank you to everyone who has submitted articles and pictures, and to the Committee for your support and patience whilst I put it all together.

Thanks must also go to everyone who helped us celebrate our 50th Anniversary; both the organising teams and the people who came to join us. We couldn't have done it without you!

The highlight of my year had to be Pauline receiving her Gold Badge Award, though. She works so hard behind the scenes to keep

everything running smoothly and is the heart of the Morris Fed Committee, making the organisation the warm, successful and supportive one it is today. It was fitting, therefore, that she should receive such recognition on such a special Anniversary as our 50th. On behalf of the entire Committee and our Membership, I would like to say, **"CONGRATULATIONS, PAULINE!"**

That's all now folks, until the next edition. It's never too late to send articles or photos, and details for submissions can be found on page 5. I look forward to receiving your articles and editing them into the next edition, which will be Autumn 2026.

Wishing you all a happy summer season of dancing!

- Eliza Russell -

