



Chair's Report to the 2023 AGM

2023 has been an excellent year! November 2nd marked the 20th Anniversary of the first JMO Day of Dance in Trafalgar Square, celebrating the exemption to the licensing act that would have spelled so much trouble for Morris performances in the UK. To mark this anniversary, the JMO arranged for six regional Days of Dance to be held in the autumn, allowing every team the opportunity to attend an event within reasonable striking distance of home. The events in Belper, Norwich, Chester, Bath, Newcastle and finally London were a wonderful celebration of how far we've come in 20 years, and it was a privilege to take part in a 'JMO Jig' in Norwich. Nigel Strudwick (Squire of The Morris Ring) and I danced Old Molly Oxford Fieldtown to the playing of Jess Searle (Membership Communications Officer of the Morris Federation), which will have to rank as one of the highlights of my morris career! I was able to take my rapper team Mabel Gubbins to enjoy an excellent day out at the Bath event, at which Jess and I played for the JMO Jig (Ladies Pleasure Bledington, danced beautifully by Fee Lock (JMO Secretary), Andrew Knight (Secretary of The Morris Federation) and Grant Glanville (event organiser, The Morris Ring). In London, all the JMO Officers present and able (14 of us!) took part in an Adderbury Shepherds Hey – a dance very close to my heart. The London day was extremely well run in difficult weather conditions, and was a very fitting tribute to 20 years of JMO history. It was an honour to be present in Trafalgar Square alongside Chris Hall (Chair of Open Morris in 2003), Cliff Marchant (Squire of the Morris Ring in 2003) and Ann Bacon (widow of John Bacon, President of the Morris Federation in 2003), plus Lord Redesdale, who was instrumental in securing the exemption to the licencing act, and very nearly all of today's JMO officers and volunteers, and to be able to say a few words in warm appreciation of the friendship between the organisations that has grown in the past 20 years.

These regional events were run in addition to the annual JMO DOD in April, which this year was hosted by Beltane Border Morris, on behalf of OM, in Exeter on Saturday April 22nd. I was delighted to be able to attend this extremely well run event, and very proud of the professional level of organisation Beltane brought to the day. I'd like to take the opportunity once again to thank Lisa Schneidau and the rest of the Beltane organising committee for all their hard work in making the day a success.

In March I attended the Morris Ring's Annual Representatives' Meeting, (ARM), in company with Malcolm Hills, Web Officer, and I'd like to thank the Ring for their hospitality once again. In September I attended the Morris Federation's annual Day of Dance and AGM in Bishop's Castle, Shropshire, and I'd also like to thank the Federation for their lovely hospitality and an excellent weekend of dance.

A great deal of my work this year has been concerned with the JMO Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) panel. Between the writing of this report and the AGM, we will have presented a paper on the use of songs in Morris to the VWML Conference at Cecil Sharp House, and are looking to the future with a number of projects that OM members will be able to learn more about and contribute to.

This year I've been lucky enough to enjoy a great deal of dancing, including trips to Sidmouth, Shrewsbury and Swanage with Rockhopper, BunkFest with Borderline, a wonderful Camp Clog, Rochester, Hastings Jack in the Green, Bradford on Avon with Old Speckled Hen, Chippenham with Theale Tattoo, DERT with Mabel Gubbins, Stourbridge with Sharp & Blunt, Weymouth with Enigma, and many other events besides, as well as celebrations for my slightly significant birthday, that have of course involved lots of dancing!

I'm sad to report that Shinfield Shambles, long term OM members and the first side I joined as a child, have finally hung up their rag waistcoats this year after 29 years of dancing. Although I've not been able to do as much as I'd have liked with them in recent years, my life wouldn't have been the same without them and all I've learned along the way. Thank you for everything – and looking forward to one last chocolate cake!

As always, thanks are due to the rest of my wonderful Open Morris team, who keep the wheels of the organisation turning smoothly. Web Officer Malcolm Hills is standing down this year, and his expertise and companionship will be much missed, though he has promised to stick around and keep an eye on us for a while! The rest of our committee, Liz, John and Hetty, and our Area Representatives Chris, Clare, Craig, Robin and Sam, have been their wonderful selves and it's been a joy to work with them, as ever.

This year in particular huge thanks are also due to to my colleagues and friends within the JMO, whose camaraderie in this anniversary year has been a very special thing.

Jen Cox

Chair

Open Morris

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