MORTIMER'S MORRIS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER 2015 AT 1300 HOURS
AT ST JOHN'S CHURCH HALL, BILBOROUGH

MINUTES

1. Attendance

Apologies

Chris, Ruth, Emma and Flora Lewis-Jones, Amelia Collins, Tanya Grimes, Charles Chambers, Vicky Johnson, Trevor Webster, Sarah-Beth Walsh, Lys Evans, Kathryn Mahon.

Present

Victoria Day, Pat Clarke, Yvonne Kawecka, Chris Plant, Keith Baker, Liz Fraser, Peter Millington, Gill Francis, Claire Halliday, Celia Mahon, Sheila Garner, Sarah Fowler, Linda Sullivan, Fran Moore, Hannah Sutcliffe, Hazel Old, Anthony Dudson.

Meeting chair

Pat Clarke agreed to chair the meeting.

2. Minutes last AGM

Minutes of the AGM held on 7th September 2014 were approved.

3. Matters arising

Beer mats - no progress to report.

Martin Wildig - treasurer to check whether he was paid.

Kit - to be discussed later. Sheila to check current location of stock of bias ribbon.

Punctuality - ongoing problem.

Recruitment - open days - two new dancers had started but hadn't kept up.

Barge trip in Netherlands - to discuss under events.

4. Reports

(a) Squire (Sheila)

See report at **Appendix A**.

Sheila reported that she no longer wished to be squire or take on other officer roles but was still committed to the side and would be there.

She asked whether the side needed to do more to advertise that it was still available for bookings (noted Liz had already talked to Chris Rose re Southwell and Folk East).

We also needed to remember that successful organisation of the Morris Federation AGM in 2016 would be important for our reputation.

(b) Treasurer (Victoria)

See accounts at **Appendix B**.

We appeared to have over £1000 in the savings account and over £3000 in the current account. We made a made profit of over £400 in the year.

Chris reported that she had forms to fill in for online access.

Celia asked if there was any point in having two accounts, as interest in the savings account was only 17p. In the light of problems in changing signatories and account access, it was proposed that the new treasurer should investigate opening a new account and closing both existing accounts.

Victoria asked that everyone pay their subs annually and electronically if possible but it was essential that people emailed the treasurer to let her know when they made direct payments to the account. Half year subs made extra work in chasing payments. Members could pay monthly by standing order if they preferred. All subs had been paid for last year. Subs for this year were due after the AGM.

(c) Secretary (Liz)

See report at **Appendix C**.

(d) Publicity Officer (Flora/Sarah)

Sarah reported on publicity activities over the year.

Liz reported that she replies to Facebook queries.

Anthony had put open days on Facebook.

(e) Practice Leader (Yvonne/Pat)

See report at **Appendix D**.

(f) Band Leader (Anthony)

Charles had joined the band and had become a confident, regular member. John Garner came back after a year off but had sent an email yesterday saying he wished to call it a day. No other new members had joined. Band kit is discussed later.

5. Election of officers

(a) Squire

There was some discussion re the role of the squire and about whether lists were necessary for dance-outs. Linda felt they were essential as part of being professional. Liz felt they were not necessary. Yvonne pointed out that Mortimer's had danced for longer without lists than with lists.

Celia asked could we have someone allocated to lead at each booking, to take pressure off the squire. Sheila felt a figurehead was needed to represent the side in public. It was pointed out that the squire's role is described in the constitution.

Victoria Day was proposed by Liz Fraser and seconded by Hazel Old. There were no other candidates and Victoria was duly appointed.

(b) Treasurer

Fran Moore was proposed by Victoria Day and second by Linda Sullivan. There were no other candidates and Fran was duly appointed.

(c) Secretary

Liz Fraser was proposed by Victoria Day and seconded by Linda Sullivan. There were no other candidates and Liz was duly appointed.

(d) Publicity Officer

It was recognised that this was becoming a bigger role. Keith said he could assist but not electronically. Claire Halliday offered to look after Twitter and Facebook.

Sarah Fowler was proposed by Sheila Garner and seconded by Claire. There were no other candidates and Sarah was duly appointed.

(e) Practice Leader

Chris Plant said she was willing to share the role on a 50:50 basis, as she had other pressures with work and care of relatives. She would be happy to share the role with Vicky Johnson and had discussed this with her. Hazel said she would be happy to take on part of the role, if there was notation available for each dance, but could not do 50%.

Chris Plant and Vicky Johnson were proposed by Gill Francis and seconded by Liz Fraser. There were no other candidates and Chris and Vicky were appointed to share the role.

(f) Band Leader

Anthony proposed that the role should be split between a musical director role (to arrange practices and co-ordinate new tunes) and a 'band squire' role (to organise matters during dance outs). This was agreed in principle.

Claire Halliday agreed to carry out the band squire role. Chris Lewis-Jones was suggested for the musical director role but this had not been discussed with him. It was agreed that Anthony Dudson would remain in post until he had discussed new arrangements with Chris.

(g) Archive Officer

Yvonne Kawecka was happy to continue in the role. This was agreed.

(h) Kit Officer

Thanks were expressed to Gill Francis and Chris Plant for doing a good job. In particular a lot of time had been spent on sticks. They were happy to continue in the role and this was agreed.

6. Communication

The side used Facebook, Doodle, emails 'reply all'

There had been difficulties in keeping track of who was available for bookings as GoogleDocs np longer worked. Doodle had been tried but was not really suitable. These difficulties may have contributed to poor turnouts.

Liz stressed that even if people had told her verbally they could not do bookings, she really needed this in writing to ensure that the availability list was always accurate and up to date. Getting a side together for Stuff of Life had been particularly difficult.

Liz was keen on a simple spreadsheet using email communication from members to update it. She was hoping that the spreadsheet could be available on the website so people could check the latest situation at any time. She could send out the spreadsheet regularly every two weeks but it was essential that members let Liz know as soon as possible if their commitments changed. Linda said we needed to decide whether this would be interactive or something just Liz updated. It was proposed that Liz would maintain the spreadsheet.

Linda asked that members stop using 'reply all' to emails unless necessary. Sheila proposed that all replies re booking availability should go to the secretary and squire only, Linda added band leader and practice leader to this list. Members should think about who needed to know before replying.

Linda suggested a private Facebook group would help communications. This was agreed. Linda would set up and be administrator

Additionally Liz would arrange to put the spreadsheet on the private Facebook page.

7. Kit (including banner and outerwear/casual wear and band kit)

Sheila noted that some kit was getting tatty - some has been around for 18 years.

Hannah noted that it was impossible to get matching buttons for waistcoats and skirts

Celia asked if it would be possible to lay new pieces on the waistcoat. Sheila noted that her waistcoat back had already been turned.

Waistcoat

It was agreed not to change the design. Some dancers needed new as theirs were getting shabby. Sheila would talk to Gill and Sheila re stock and requirements for ribbon and fabric. Linda asked why not pay someone to make new waistcoats. Sheila Gill and Chris would look into this.

Skirts

Celia noted that Fee Lock would make skirts

Claire suggested getting skirts from M&S and modifying.

Linda thought the skirts were too dated - they made people feel middle aged - they were too long.

Celia stressed we must get all the same length - this had been agreed previously and it was not clear what had happened.

Linda would look at design and draw up some ideas. Hannah would also sketch a range of alternative designs. Sheila would also look at design. The aim would be to have these available for the first day practice in November 2015. Hazel could arrange skirts to be copied in China.

Tops

Sheila said that V-neck ¾-sleeve black tops were difficult to find. Celia suggested looking at getting a batch of another colour (e.g. grey) and dyeing them.

Outer/casual wear

Sheila said there were people without fleeces and some were scruffy. It would be better to go for an updated design - how about hoody with zip? The majority present approved this idea.

Corporate image

This needed review. There was a need to think about logo and strapline. The shield logo was seen by some present as very old fashioned. The banner should also be included in the review.

Hannah had done a drawing for Fran's birthday and could have a look at this again. This would be welcomed.

Band kit

Chris Lewis-Jones had sent an email suggesting that we needed to look at the image of the side as a whole, including the band. It was agreed that it needed Chris present to discuss this.

The band shirts were no longer made. Anthony suggested it might be best to buy a lot of shirts (or material) now. The band would discuss before the 8th November practice.

Sheila reported that Claire wanted to dance and asked would there be a problem with her playing in dance kit. It was agreed this was not an issue with the dancers or the band.

Chris Plant commented, re corporate design, that Zoe originally did linking ribbons for band hats and asked if this could be fed back to discussions with Chris Lewis-Jones.

Clogs

Edges of clogs were discussed - it was agreed all edges should be coloured black. If they weren't already they could be stained.

11. Dances to prioritise

Yvonne asked whether, as we had fewer dancers, we should give more priority to dances for 6.

Linda pointed out that dances for 6 were not traditional. Bigger numbers looked better.

Keith noted that French tunes were not traditional anyway.

Sheila felt that doing lots of dances for 6 sent out the wrong signal - if we couldn't do dances for 8 then she would rather Mortimer's folded on a high note than declined gradually.

Chris pointed out that dances for 6 could be danced double and look really good (e.g. Mighty Oak)

Hazel asked what was the minimum number of dancers for accepting a booking. For local dance outs could this be 9? Linda pointed out that it was not just numbers but knowledge of dancers and positions. It was usually discussed at practice and depended on who had volunteered.

12. Dancing performance standards (polkas, lines, knees)

Linda was concerned that some dancers were not doing polkas properly.

Hazel felt from watching at the Morris Federation AGM at Bath that inclusion was most important.

Liz said that if we excluded people who couldn't do everything we wouldn't have enough dancers.

Pat felt that we had to balance inclusion vs being a high quality performance side. As a side she thought we had lost sight of an aspirational way to dance. Liz suggested this was because we had got older. Sheila said it was also a matter of keeping up fitness levels up. Should we bring down standards to the lowest common denominator? Hazel suggested we had a problem if we excluded people. Linda said that Silkstone Greens had people who didn't do any polka dances, for example. Pat felt it depended on the event. Gill suggested that each dancer should talk to practice leaders/squire to agree what they were happy to do and were competent to do. Pat stressed that dancers needed to attend practice. Chris thought that exercises at the start of practice exercise were really important. Linda also felt that how you carried yourself was very important - you could look better than you really were; a smile helped.

13. Commitment to attending practices and dance outs

Vicky had sent an email saying that inconsistency of attendance at practice, had affected some of our performances adversely. She recognised that many of the side were at a stage in their lives when they were overstretched and there was no easy answer but only a few more people at a few more practices would make a big difference to our ability to dance our best.

Liz also put out a plea for people to honour commitments to bookings. Sheffield Giants was a problem - now down to 9 dancers. Sheila urged people to respond yes or no rather than maybe but recognised it was sometimes difficult to commit so far in advance. Celia identified the problem with people who dance for two sides but it was understood that you couldn't wait to see what else was available as we needed to confirm bookings in advance.

14. Events for 2016

Liz summarised invitations so far for 2015-16:

- Sheffield Giants in Nottingham on 18th October (accepted) - add Victoria and Sheila
- Victoria at Beeston on 19th December - OK
- IVDF in Coventry on 26-28th February - student folk dance festival but others come - rotates round universities - Warwick this year - looking for NW Workshop - also a morris tour - free tickets - indoor camping - looks OK
- Ossett Beer Cart on 3-5th June - possible
- Southwell Festival on 9-12th June - possible
- Evesham - need to apply - 16-18 June - possible
- Braunston Historic Boat Show on 25-26 June - OK
- Folk East on 19-21st August 2016 - OK
- Wallingford Bunk Fest - check date early September
- Morris Federation AGM 24th September

Liz asked if there were any other events to target. Warwick Folk Festival (22-24 July 2016) was suggested and members thought there would be enough support. Liz stressed that she didn't want to press for invites unless there were likely to be enough dancers.

Chris Plant asked members to let her know whether there was any interest in a barge trip in the Netherlands. If so, she would investigate further.

15. Any other business

Celia urged use of whistles at practice. Whistles should be used at dance-outs, including to call attention at the start. Claire said whistles helped the band a lot. It was agreed all callers should use whistles.

Christmas party - Sheila had volunteered to host - date to be advised.

Open days - all practices up to December would be open days - Liz to put on website. It should also go on Facebook.

Members asked for a list of officers with contact details to be on the website - Liz would pursue this.

16. Date for 2016 AGM

2nd October 2016 (the week after the Morris Federation AGM.

Members thanked Pat for chairing the meeting.

APPENDIX A

Squire's report 2014-5

To begin this year's report I'd like to mention some issues which have also been proposed as Agenda items, specifically the numbers of dancers at practice and numbers of band and dancers committing in a timely way to invitations. The result of this was that we have performed with quite reduced numbers of dancers at all of this summer's events, never having been able to have 16 dancers up at one time. In addition having committed to Sidmouth the previous year it looked as though we would be performing without a box player until John stepped in. The fact that we then had the whole band there was fantastic.

The overall standard of the performance was generally good with the occasional blip. We have danced a limited repertoire at times and how best to manage the large number of dances needs some discussion in the coming season.

There are many people we should thank including Sarah and Tanya for all the work they did for our weekend and not forgetting Chris who joined them in the later stages to help. The weekend was only marred by the weather which was possibly the worst we experienced all summer but we were able to make the most of it and the highlights - signing the Morris Magna Carta, the glowsticks dance (although not getting into that particular kit) and the cod piece competition.

Liz deserves special mention for trying to keep us all informed throughout the year with the particular communication problems since the breakdown of the Google Docs. Possible solutions are on the Agenda for discussion later.

Thanks also to Claire, Lys and Victoria who had the idea and did the work for the Silent Ceilidh spot at Sidmouth which went down so well with the audience, to Chris for the silent instruments and to all those who joined in despite personal reservations. It was not only a huge success but great fun. With regard to ceilidh spots generally, we should bear in mind that these need something extra in the performance and a lot of extra time in the lead up to them.

So to the future - currently we only have a few invitations and again this will be discussed later; however, we are committed to hosting the Morris Federation AGM and I would ask that we support this to make it a big success.

I continue to be passionate about North West Morris and Mortimer's in particular and love being part of the team. I look forward to the new year with lots of good times together and new challenges.

Sheila Garner

Squire

Mortimer's Morris

4th October 2015

APPENDIX B

Treasurer's report 2014-5

Mortimers Morris October 14 - 29/09/15

Savings AC	
Balance Dec 14	1133.12
Interest	0.17
Balance March 15	**1133.29**
Current account	
Balance 27/02/15	2436.12
Balance 27/07/15	**2898.5**
Petty Cash	**37.62**
Total Funds @ 27/07/15	**4069.41**

Income

Subs	740
Mortimer's WE	3105
SCM WE	1510
Sidmouth	160
Braunston Marina	300
	5815

Expenditure

Hall hire(to Aug 15)	312.5
Presents	73.2
Morris Fed & Insurance	85
Keys	14.5
Clogs	10
Mortimer's WE	3048.11
Website	25
Sidmouth Party	29.49
Stick bag	36
Canal House deposit	100
SCM WE	1510
Sidmouth	160
	5403.8

Profit **411.2**

Bank balance increased by 462.49 so 51.29 unaccounted for in bank account
BUT June/July Hall hire, Canal House deposit repayment cheques not cashed on most recent statement
Total value 150.00 so total funds should be **3919.41 @ 29/09/15**

APPENDIX C

Secretary's report 2014-5

During the last year the side received at least 38 invitations (5 more than the previous year) to dance out at festivals, morris weekends and at local events. During the year Mortimer's attended 12 events (the same as last year). These included:

- 4 festivals (Derby, Holmfirth [1 day only], Southwell and Sidmouth);
- 2 morris weekends (Sheffield City 40th birthday and Mortimer's own weekend at North Muskham);
- 5 local dance outs (Beeston Canal Heritage Day, Beeston Ceilidh, Victoria at Beeston, Plough Sunday, Stuff of Life);
- Braunston Historic Boat Show (which provided an income of £300).

Mortimer's also accepted an invitation from the Morris Federation to run the AGM and Day of Dance in Nottingham in September 2016 and some preliminary work has been carried out this year, including booking a venue (The Canalhouse), booking a ceilidh band (Peeping Tom, selected by a members' vote), surveying dance spots around the town and submitting an initial request to Nottingham City Council for relevant permissions. Meetings were held to discuss arrangements on 19th July and 27th September and a further planning meeting is scheduled for 1815h on Sunday 15th November 2015.

Other invitations received so far for the coming year include Sheffield Giants in Nottingham on 18th October (accepted), Victoria at Beeston on 19th December, IVDF in Coventry on 26-28th February, Ossett Beer Cart on 3-5th June, Southwell Festival on 9-12th June, Braunston Historic Boat Show on 25-26th June and Folk East on 19-21st August 2016.

Changes were made to the system for members to sign up for events, as Google Docs no longer works as it did before. Email notifications have been used to advise members of invites with requests for responses by email and bookings maintained on a spreadsheet. Arrangements are being made for the spreadsheet to be available to members on the website. This has still not been completely satisfactory as some members do not reply to confirm whether they can or cannot attend, resulting in the secretary having to chase up responses by telephone. Any ideas on how response rates could be improved would be welcome. There have also been a few cases where bookings have been accepted on the basis of an adequate number of dancers signing up but people have withdrawn after the booking has been accepted, sometimes leaving the side in a difficult position with minimal support on the day.

Liz Fraser

Secretary

Mortimer's Morris

4th October 2015

APPENDIX D

Practice Leader's report 2014-5

Thank you for working with 2 practice leaders over the last 2 years. It really helps to reduce pressure in a teaching situation if there is another person to confer and check with.

This has been a challenging year for us. We started the year with 20 dancers in the team (excluding Hazel who was abroad): the average attendance (excluding 2 new people who only attended a very few practices) was 10, with a high of 14 and several at 7 or 8. Obviously each person has their own valid reasons for non-attendance.

The consequence of the lack of consistent attendance has been that it has been difficult to maintain and raise standards. This applies both to individual dancers and also to the team's consistency of style, which relies on the group of dancers working together and not as 6 or 8 individuals. The lack of practice tended to manifest itself in inconsistent performance from one dance to the next. A particularly disappointing consequence has been the failure to reach a standard with Marston enabling it to be danced out regularly. Another was the limited range of dances we were able to dance out this summer.

On the up side, several people have learned dances they didn't know previously and there has been some good dancing at events this year, with nice lines and high energy. Audiences are still enjoying our dancing.

If, as seems likely, the lower than historic level of attendance experienced over the last couple of years is a reflection of members' current lifestyles, then Mortimer's needs to factor that in to future planning as a side.

We would like to thank the musicians for their assistance and patience at practices. Also to everyone who has supported us this year. We pass on good wishes to the next practice leader(s).

Yvonne Kawecka & Pat Clarke

Joint Practice Leaders

Mortimer's Morris

4th October 2015