

# Manchester Morris Dancers

## Minutes of the AGM 2021

Held at The Volunteer Inn, Sale – Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021

**Present:** George Clapton (Squire), John Alexander (Bagman), Tony Battilana, Roy Battersby, David Doolin, John Edge, Frank Frankel, Roger Hare, Velson Horie, Marjorie Morris, Brendan Morrison, Ian Porter, Malcolm Thomson, George Waterhouse

**Observer:** Anne Stopford

**1. Apologies for Absence:** Roger Bryant, Richard Hampar, Nick Roberson, Bruce Taylor

**2. Minutes of the 2020 AGM** were accepted *nem con*.

### **3. Treasurer's Report**

“As expected for the year there has been minimal activity on the club's bank account. Despite this the club's total funds have increased to £1,572.40 (£502.99 increase on last year) mainly due to the collection of subs and that we have only had to start paying for hall hire from 20th May 21. Due to the small number of transactions this year I have only provided a very simple accounts that still shows all the club's financial information. Hopefully this coming year there will be more going on.”

	20/21
<b>Opening Bank Balance as of 16/10/2020</b>	<b>1,069.41</b>
<b>Cash</b>	
Subs	395.00
Returned St. Peter's Hall Desposit	100.00
<b>Expenses</b>	
Church Hall Rental	(200.00)
<b>Payables</b>	
Spain Deposit	325.00
<b>Closing Bank Balance as of 30/10/2021</b>	<b>1,689.41</b>
<b>Outstanding transactions</b>	
Return of Spain Deposit	(325.00)
Stockport Fee (11/09/2021)	100.00
Collection from Stockport (Unbanked)	25.49
Owed to John for Club's domain name	(7.50)
Gorton Fee (26/10/2021)	250.00
Unpaid Church Hall Rental (8 sessions)	(160.00)
<b>Expected Club Funds</b>	<b>1,572.40</b>

John A presented the report in Richard's absence. There were no questions or comments. John apologised that the officers had overlooked the appointment of an auditor, and asked if the meeting had any objection to accepting the Treasurer's Report without an auditor's report; no objections were raised, and the report was accepted.

#### **4. Reports from other officers.**

These appear in Appendix 1. There were no comments on the reports.

#### **5. Squire's Comments**

"The past 20 months have been a challenging time for us all.

When I followed on after Nick as Squire last year I had hoped that, by building on the 'socially distanced' adaptation of some of our Cotswold and North West Dance repertoires, we might be able to start dancing out at some carefully selected locations by early summer. Unfortunately the last minute lockdown last Christmas and the subsequent further restrictions on public gatherings made this impractical.

It also meant that our planned (and delayed) 90th Anniversary Celebration (rebranded 90+1) was still not viable. So, in consultation with the Bagman and others, it was cancelled. Our Hall deposit was refunded in full by St Peter's

Although this enforced suspension of activities placed severe restrictions on our usual dance activities throughout this period, it has meant that we now have a repertoire of 'socially distanced' Cotswold and North West dances that we can fall back upon, if needed, in the future.

In this respect I believe it is important that we recognise the dedication and commitment made by Nick, John A, Malcolm, and others, including our Musicians, in developing this 'alternative Morris' style.

These were not the only challenges that resulted from the Pandemic. Our numbers of experienced dancers have also been sadly depleted. In addition to the sad loss of Marguerite Hill to a Stroke, and the onset of increasing severe dementia in Tony Hill, stalwarts such as Bruce Taylor have moved out of the area, others have been affected by ill health, or simply decided that it may be time to consider 'hanging up their clogs'

One consequence of this is that, currently, we have been reduced to a small core of experienced dancers and musicians, with the result that, unless the majority of our active members are available for a particular date or time, we have been forced to decline a number of events, as detailed in the Bagman's report.

Additionally some of our usual annual events (Manchester Xmas Market, Boxing Day, etc) have and may continue to present challenges for some time to come, due to possible crowd management issues. (eg Manchester Xmas Markets will have barriers this year with access monitored and counted to restrict numbers and avoid overcrowding. So it is unlikely that we would be provided with enough space to dance)

I have been trying to contact the organisers of some of these events to re-establish contact but without much success to date as contact details and names appear to have changed, so I have been investigating some possible alternative options which I shall raise for discussion later.

Despite these difficulties we have recently been able to put a small side together to dance at the Stockport Heritage Day and the Gorton 'Benches' Day. Both events proved to be a real success and I hope that we will be able to continue this trend as time goes by.

Membership numbers will be critical to this and we need to find ways to attract more active members. With this in mind I would like to restart our Beginners workshops again but in a rather different format.

I still have the contact details for several people who have expressed interest in coming along to our practices and propose that we invite them to come along to our regular Thursday practice nights.

I realise that this could impact adversely with getting our regular main programme up to scratch. Ideally I would like to take any such beginners to one side and teach them some of our basic dances separately rather than ‘throwing them in the deep end’ with the rest of us, so that they are not discouraged.

I have spoken with Helen, the Hall manager about this and she has indicated that if there is an empty room nearby then we can make use of it, without charge, rather than holding the session in the corridor or lobby.

Finally I would like to thank everyone for the support and encouragement that everyone has shown me following my Hip Replacement operation and recovery. It has been much appreciated and I look forward to being able to join in fully with all of our dances in the not too distant future.

Let’s all look forward to creating an environment where our numbers of active members increase and we can start a whole new chapter for our Side as we enter our 92nd year.”

**Discussion following the Squire’s comments:**

George added that he had contacted the landlady of The Fox at Brook Bottom, and she was very keen for us to perform there this year on Boxing Day, – customers were asking if we would! Discussion on this was deferred to ‘Any Other Business’.

Velson commented, regarding re-making contacts in Manchester council: there were some councillors at the event in Gorton on 26<sup>th</sup> October.

*[Post meeting note: George will ask the event organisers for these councillors’ contact details. ]*

**6. Election of Officers**

John A pointed out that we would normally appoint a Squire Elect this year, George having been in office for a year, and asked if there were any volunteers.

George W proposed that, in view of our lack of activity this year due to the Covid19 restrictions, the Squire’s term of office should be extended to 3 years on this occasion. John A seconded this. The motion was accepted *nem con*.

John A reported that, contrary to the remark in his report, Nick had agreed to stay on as Ragman.

The existing officers, listed below, were then re-elected.

Office		Office	
Squire	George Clapton	Publicity	Velson Horie
Squire Elect		Webmaster	Richard Hampar
Bagman	John Alexander	Facebook	Brendan Morrison
Treasurer	Richard Hampar	Archivist	Velson Horie
Bandmaster	Tony Battilana	Scrapbook Keeper	Tony Battilana
Ragman	Nick Roberson	Digital Scrapbook	George Waterhouse
Tours Organiser	George Clapton		

**7. Any Other Business**

- The Squire thanked Richard for hosting our ‘zoom’ meetings which were held in lieu of practices during the Covid19 lockdowns.

- Roger H asked whether a solution to our frequent difficulty of not having sufficient dancers available for events could be solved by combining forces with another Morris team? The Squire commented this has the drawback that other teams have different dancing styles to us, and even different versions of dances. John A suggested that it might be possible to combine if we limited ourselves to dances selected by the Squire of the Morris Ring for ‘massed’ dances at Ring events, – which both us and other teams should know.

- Tony said he hoped we could resurrect the Alderley dance soon. The Squire said he’s keen to do so, but prefers to leave it until the new year in order to concentrate on our existing dances for now.

The question arose: who would lead Alderley, now that Bruce is not available? – John A volunteered, but said he’d need notice of its re-introduction to give him time for revision.

John also pointed out that, as Nick does not wish to dance at the moment, we only have 7 dancers who have learnt Alderley.

**Action:** John will ask Bruce if he can see a way to adapt the dance for 4 dancers.

Malcolm (who cannot do the dance as it hurts his knees) said he hoped there would be no repeat of the long periods teaching it during which he sat out.

- John A asked if people felt it was time to re-introduce Oldham, which he has omitted since Covid19 as it requires close proximity (during the moves ‘One Half’ and ‘Two Number Ones’). Only the last was felt to be a problem, and John was asked to consider its temporarily modification such that the pairs of dancers maintain a distance from each other.

- It was asked if we will be re-introducing the sword dance? There was a general feeling that this is not feasible, at least during normal practice times, in view of the amount of practice we need for the Cotswold and North West dances. Ian made the point that we have “two strings to our bow” with those dances, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> (i.e. the sword) would be too much.

- Malcolm asked if we should consider resurrecting our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary events (cancelled due to Covid19), but after discussion it was agreed not to, for the coming (morris) year at least.

- Should we have a pre-Christmas dance-out? Members’ availabilities point to the 4<sup>th</sup> December as the best date.

**Actions: ALL:** reserve the date. **Tours Organiser:** consider possible locations.

- The Fox, Boxing Day: our problem with music for this event persists, Tony being unavailable; but Ian said he may be able to persuade his daughter to drive him there on the day. Further discussion was postponed to Bagman’s Business once we know Ian’s availability.

- The Morris Ring’s proposed changes to its constitution –

The proposals were circulated by the Ring, for comment, 3 days ago. Comments at this meeting included: “it’s a sledgehammer to crack a nut”; “what are the ‘codes of conduct’ and ‘standards’ mentioned, and who decides if a member team meets them?”; “it appears to be ‘back covering’ by the Ring, leaving individual sides to decide how to achieve the (vague) aims in the proposals”.

Not all members had read the proposals yet, and it was felt to be too soon to form a team view. The Squire suggested we concentrate on how the proposals affect us directly.

**Action: ALL** to send observations on the proposals to the Bagman, for circulation to the whole team before a team discussion at a later date.

## **Appendix 1: Other Officers' Reports**

### **Bagman's report** – John Alexander

Between last year's AGM (held via zoom) and April this year we were holding zoom meetings in lieu of practices due to government restrictions and our own worries about Covid. Thankfully the roll-out of vaccinations from January meant that we felt safe enough to hold practices outside in the car park at St Matthew's Hall from 8<sup>th</sup> April, and inside from 20<sup>th</sup> May, albeit with some members deciding not to risk joining us. Later we experimented with continuing practices during August, in the hope of dancing out in September; but in the event we only had enough members to meet twice in August, and eventually decided it was not yet time to try dancing outside pubs. However, we have danced at two paying engagements:

Stockport Heritage Day, 11<sup>th</sup> September (£100). This was Marjorie's first dance-out in costume.

Gorton 'Age Friendly Benches' inauguration, 26<sup>th</sup> October (£250). This was Anne's first dance-out in costume.

I have had to turn down invitations to six events; and my quotation of £40 to a care home was rejected when they found another team to do it for free! The declined events were:

- A care home, for St George's Day
- Eccles Beer and Cider Festival (clashed with Whitby Folk Festival)
- Saddleworth rushcart (clashed with Whitby Folk Festival; but was cancelled anyway)
- Sowerby Bridge Rushcart, 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> September
- Fun Day, St Andrew's Church Cheadle Hume, 11<sup>th</sup> September
- A "corporate dinner with a circus theme" 10<sup>th</sup> October in Ascot (they were not deterred by my quotation of £850, which included overnight accommodation!)

Unfortunately our numbers are considerably reduced from a year ago: Bruce has moved to the Newark area; Roy, and Roger Bryant, are suffering joint problems, Julian's hearing loss has forced him to give up dancing, and Nick has decided to take a break due to the pressure of work. On the bright side Marjorie and Anne have now made their Cotswold kit, and have both attended their first dance-out; and the Squire is starting to do some dancing after his hip operation in April. However, we are left with only 8 dancers (this includes George) fully conversant with the North-West dances; and although I have adapted a number of these for four, in order to accept any event we need nearly all of us to be available.

### **Bandmaster's Report** – Tony Battilana

As we emerge into (what I hope will be) the post-covid era, Ian, Marjorie, Roger and I are back as the standard line-up for practices (with occasional forays into dancing for Marjorie and me.) We enjoy the increasing opportunities to play tunes in their entirety, with the usual number of repeats. We also look forward to increasing opportunities to perform in public.

Last year, I bemoaned the forced cancellation of our plans for a first public performance of the Alderley Dance. Amongst all our other priorities, we should not lose sight of that objective, even though Bruce has moved to "pastures new".

It is possible that Boxing Day at the Fox will return this year, but I am unlikely to be available if it does.

**Ragman's Report** – Nick Roberson

Over winter I repainted the molly box front completely (adding new designs of dancers to reflect our multi gender team) together with the Facebook logo.

The two sets of Cotswold sticks that have been seasoning in my garden these last two years are now in the practice room and will be ready to tidy up and use.

I have been working just recently with Marjorie and Ann so that they may spend the winter making kit.

Marjorie now has the hat ribbons, North-west pad materials and instructions together with her sash rosettes. This will complete her costume.

Ann is underway with her breeches and I will be on hand to work with her over the winter.

I am prepared to continue as Ragman for the next season.

**Scrapbook Keeper's Report** – Tony Battilana

I continue to store the Scrapbook and to receive additional contributions, but the contributions are few and I am unable to care for it in any other way. The Scrapbook would undoubtedly benefit from a more proactive Keeper. Meanwhile, please keep the contributions coming and remember to label them, at least with the date and place.

**Digital Scrapbook Keeper's Report** – George Waterhouse

The only addition this year was 2 pictures from Gorton that I received and added today (28.10.21).

**Web Master's Report** – Richard Hampar

There have been minimal changes required to the website in the past year. The only change happened when all the linked flickr videos embedded on the site had to be removed. This was due to the fact they were embedded using Adobe Flash which finally reached end of life on 31/12/2020 and therefore the videos stopped functioning. I was unable to find the links to the original videos on flickr which meant I was unable to re-embed them using updated code.

**Facebook Officers report** – Brendan Morrison

I agreed to take over as keeper of the MMD Facebook page some time ago and had arrange with Nick to have a handover period. Then Covid arrived and put paid to that! Fast forward to a few weeks ago and we finally managed to come together via Zoom, and I now have access to our page. There have been significant changes to how Facebook operate our type of page and it is taking me some time to get up to speed. I have received some help from a friend who is well acquainted on all things Facebook and hope to be posting regularly on our page before too long, and certainly before we start dancing out again on a regular basis.