From the Bagman: Info for Newbies (or anyone else who has forgotten)

Don't worry, we won't be doing everything on the spreadsheet! This is just to gather numbers for all possible events. Everyone has the chance to suggest events, and the spreadsheet is to help work out which ones we can do.
If you want to suggest an official NMM event, then please follow the procedure that can be found in the members area of the NMM website. Thank you.

[interruption from web-elf: please see notes about the Sheets app at the end]

Events will be removed if we don't have enough people signed up for them in time to register, make the various arrangements etc., or if we feel we have too many events close together.
So it's worth signing up quickly if you're keen to do a specific event.

Please fill in the spreadsheet as soon as you are able. You can put short comments or ?s if you're not sure yet.
There are RSVP dates on some of the events. *They are likely to disappear after that date if we don't have enough people signed up for them!*

When we have enough people, the event turns green on the spreadsheet. That means it's confirmed. After this time, please try not to pull out unless absolutely necessary as it may affect our ability to do that event, or cause us to let people down. *If you do need to pull out of an event that you've signed up for, please tell me as soon as you can* in case we need to re-assess the event. We realise this is sometimes unavoidable, but we do need to know.

The on-line spreadsheet is the master copy.
I bring a paper copy to practice each week, which you can also sign up on. I then update the online spreadsheet from this once a week.
You are free to change your availability on the online speadsheet at any time, until it has been confirmed (gone green).
*If you **change** your availability on the paper spreadsheet at practice, please also tell me, or make a note on the paper spreadsheet to make it obvious* - otherwise I won't know which is the most up to date information.
(No need to tell me the first time you fill in the paper spreadsheet - only if you change it.)

We mostly do local-ish events but, every now and then, we go away to a folk festival or similar. In the past we have gone further afield (eg Swanage, Wimbourne, Rochester) but we decided this year to stay more local as we were a little low on numbers at the end of last summer.
We also want to be seen as much as possible in our local area to establish ourselves as the "go-to" local Morris side, and hopefully pick up a regular supply of new members.
So far this strategy has been proving very successful!!

Most of the proposed "away" events (folk festivals) this coming year are therefore do-able in a day, but they also have options for camping and making a weekend of it for those who wish to. This is a great way for everyone to get to know each other and there are usually lots of other fun things to do at festivals if you stay for the weekend. Morris dancers usually get reduced price tickets for festivals, sometimes free day tickets or free camping. It varies. Next year we will look at some more "away" festivals if we have enough people who want to do that. We will re-asses this in the Autumn, and gather everyone's opinions. We have a mixed membership, with different needs and commitments, so we try to offer something for everyone. We will always do plenty of local events, though, for those who aren't able to go further afield.

Most new members are able to dance two or three dances in public within a couple of months, some people in a couple of weeks! This can vary hugely, though, from person to person, and there is no pressure or specific timescale.. Cath and Rebecca will let you know which dances they feel you're ready to perform in public. In the meantime, you are welcome to come to anything you like. You can play a tambourine or jingle stick, or take round the collection tin if you want to join in. There is usually a spare waistcoat available for those who don't yet have their kit. New musicians can start performing at any time, at the discretion of the "core band members", please see our constitution (on the website) for further info on this.

Partners, friends, families are usually welcome at events. Sometimes they get free tickets too.
The exception is the "Ales". These are generally for morris members only: they are a get-together of several Morris sides in a village hall who dance for each other, or all together, just for fun without any public watching, and they are hosted by one morris side who cook a meal (and provide ale) for everyone for a modest fee. If a partner is desperate to come, we could lend them a waistcoat.

Morris events are often followed by a music session in a pub afterwards where the morris musicians play together for fun, and anyone is welcome to attend, watch, or even join in if they feel the urge..

"Dance-outs" occur mainly in the summer and mainly at pubs. One Morris side invites one or two others and they take turns dancing for each other and the public outside the pub. Any that we arrange will be on Tuesdays, but others will be on the usual practice night of the host side. On those weeks, we often cancel our Tuesday practise. Please check to confirm this.

No one is obliged to do any events and we understand that everyone has different priorities and commitments - it's supposed to be fun, so just do as much as you find enjoyable. ..... But, be warned, you may find quite a lot of it enjoyable!

A few things we have already done this autumn and winter (so you know what to look forward to):

NMM Wassailing tour in January; Dancing the Sun Down for Autumn equinox, and Winter Solstice on Pitstone Hill: Tring Christmas Fair; NMM Christmas meal; a couple of Ales; a craft fair.

If you have any questions or requests, please just ask!

Helen XXX

[web-elf again: *if you have a gmail / google account, download the Sheets app onto phone or tablet - looks like this:* *or on a PC go to https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/.*
You should find the New Moon sheet there, but ask for help if not.
Above all, don't download the spreadsheet to alter it - that way madness lies. Always edit the online version – preferably in the app!]