

## Chair's Report 2019

As my tenure as Chair draws to a close after almost four years, I can look back with satisfaction at the progress Open Morris has made since I took up the post in January 2016. From a period of suspicion, mistrust and falling member numbers, we have emerged stronger, with consistently increasing numbers so that we are gradually approaching the membership levels we had pre-2016. The Officers have worked very well together this year with innovative suggestions being discussed and implemented eg how we present accounts and manage our finances; how members apply to renew membership or newcomers apply to join. Our website has been completely revamped and I urge you to visit it.

Our Sue Dyke Award competition, introduced last year, is slow to take off but I am hopeful that if all sides encourage their younger members to enter, entry numbers will blossom over the years. Last year's winner has wholeheartedly embraced morris and all it means – dancing with countless sides now, the length & breadth of the country, in many different styles and as a member of all three Morris Organisations. Surely the future of Morris?!

Some of you will know that my husband Doug died unexpectedly in June. Our sons and I decided to pass on half the funeral donations to Open Morris, to set up a memorial fund in his name. I hope this will be a resource to help fund equipment, particularly for new sides starting up. Doug was known for the morris sticks he cut from our woodland, de-barked and provided for various sides, so this will help to fill that gap!

My official duties this year have included attending various meetings in far-flung places: The JMO AGM near Nottingham, The Morris Ring ARM near Cannock and the Morris Federation AGM in Perth, Scotland. Unable to attend the Open Morris Annual Officials' Meeting in person, I was pleased to be able to attend very successfully via Skype. Apart from this, there has been the odd rumble regarding black face paint, involvement in a morris documentary but an otherwise quiet year.

The strong collaboration between the three Morris Organisations continues and I'm sure that will still be the case with our new Committee and the change of leadership in the Morris Federation. New faces mean new ideas and that is the way the Morris world will flourish. I would urge all members to consider becoming an Open Morris Officer or Area Rep to increase the diversity of ideas.

I would like to thank all my fellow Officers and Area Reps for their help and support this year and throughout my term as Chair. The Open Morris Committee is only as successful as the sum of its parts and I'm confident that this success and support will continue into the future. I wish my successor a happy and productive time as Chair.

Nicki Pickering

Open Morris Chair