

Sue Dyke Award

2020 Report and Evaluation

Sue Dyke was a longstanding member of various OM member teams and a past OM Officer. Sadly, Sue died in early 2017 and her husband Ken contacted Nicki, as the then OM Chair, with the amazing offer to make OM the beneficiary of the funeral donations.

During conversations with Ken it quickly became clear that Sue had been particularly concerned about bringing young people into Morris and keeping them. The Committee then spent several months discussing ideas that would promote this ideal and, with Ken's approval, plans for a youth competition and award in Sue's name were formulated.

It was almost a year later that 5 judges were recruited from the Folk, Morris and general dance world. The judges were picked for their expertise in dance, music and the creative arts in various forms. For the past 2 years, we have had 6 judges, but we may drop back to 5 again next year as it makes a non-unanimous decision easier to manage. We are very grateful for all the hard work the judges have put in over the three years, to produce verdicts in the short space of time between the closing dates and the deadlines for informing the winners.

So far the judges have been able to reach unanimous decisions, although they have been impressed by the universally high standard of all the entries. We have recently awarded prizes for the third year of the competition. Although there were only two entries, involving four competitors, we were pleased to see that they were younger than most of the entrants from previous years. We were also heartened this year to find that both entries consisted of dances written by the young people. We felt that children writing dances during Covid-19 lockdown was a very positive outcome for the competition, suggesting, as the judges said, that the future of Morris is secure.

Sue was a member of Lady Bay Revellers and they kindly donated a beautiful tankard in her memory. The competition winner has a year's custodianship of this tankard engraved with their name, a £100 cash prize and a certificate. The runner up receives a certificate and a £50 cash prize. We also presented a £25 "Highly Commended" cash prize in 2018, the first year of the competition, and this year increased the second prize by the same amount to reflect the three entrants involved and the quality of their entry. The prize fund that has been given out to date has therefore totalled £500.

Originally, we had planned to present prizes at the AGM, but this was already under revision before Covid-19 made a physical AGM impossible. In future, we plan that prizes will be presented in person by a local OM Official, in front of team-mates and local press where possible. We felt this would mean more to the recipient and help to increase the profile of Morris locally. Hopefully it will also raise the profile of the competition amongst local teams and encourage more entries to the competition in future.

Last year, we looked seriously at the future, viability and rationale of the competition. In addition to the prize money, engraving and stationery costs were depleting the available funds, which are ringfenced from the main OM funds. We faced a decision to close the competition after 2020, or begin funding the competition from the main OM funds. However, earlier this year we were delighted to accept generous donations from the Potty Festival Committee and Shinfield Shambles. Totalling £1500, these donations have secured the future of the competition for several years to come.

As a measure of the success of the competition, our inaugural 2018 winner, Conor Smith, has gone on to become a confident member of several Morris Sides and has now joined the Open Morris team as the new Editor of Dancing On. 2018 runner up, Megan Evans, has become widely known for her beautifully drawn Morris related greetings cards. Hopefully the subsequent younger winners will experience similar life changing results!

Jen Cox and Nicki Pickering form the SDA Subcommittee with financial advice from Liz Scholey as OM Treasurer, and input from the other OM Officials as needed. It is the recommendation of the Subcommittee that the competition continues in its current form, and we are delighted that this year's donations encourage and allow this. Whilst we would like to see a wider range of entrants in the future, we do feel that there has already been benefit to the Morris community in the successes of our prizewinners and the engagement of our young entrants during the unusual and difficult events of 2020.

We would urge all member sides to promote the competition to their younger members and encourage them to enter. We would also welcome any feedback or suggestions for encouraging young people to enter the competition.

Please visit the Sue Dyke Award page on the OM website to view the 2020 competition entries!

Jen Cox and Nicki Pickering

SDA Subcommittee