

# Editorial

## Rosie Miles

This issue of the *Journal* contains obituaries of three men who all contributed a great deal to the William Morris Society. I did not know Edmund Penning-Rowse or Hans Brill but as the memorials to them here record, they are both part of the Society's history and were both enthusiastic champions of Morris's ideals. So too was Nick Salmon.

Nick's untimely death was a great shock to many. At the point of my taking over from Nick as Editor we had never formally met, although we had certainly been in the same room at Morris Society events on a number of occasions. I communicated with Nick by 'phone and email on a number of occasions once I had taken over, and I appreciated his comments and help in easing my way into this role. My sense of him was as something of an eccentric genius. In the last letter I received from him – only days before I heard of his death – he had three physical addresses and four email accounts, and I was never quite sure whether I was going to find him at the end of any, or all of them. He struck me as having a prodigious amount of energy which was channelled into many varied projects, not least his numerous significant publications.

In the obituary of Nick in the *Independent* Peter Faulkner wrote that 'he became perhaps the most knowledgeable student of Morris's politics since E. P. Thompson' and scholars will always be indebted to Nick for making available more of Morris's political writings as well as for his lucid articles. It is poignant that the last article Nick sent to the *Journal*, published in this issue, is entitled 'William Morris: The Final Socialist Years'. This is a fine essay, showing evidence of Nick's excellent scholarship and his humour; in the piece he does indeed take on Thompson over the extent to which Morris was in fact conversant with Marxist theory. The article ends, even more poignantly, on a clear personal note:

I always think that Morris's many biographers have missed the real man. I was born in Essex. I am 'short, stout and suffer from gout', and have had a similarly privileged life. But we are the froth on the top of a carton of sour cream, the bees buzzing round the flowers of a rotting plant, and the birds perched on the highest branch of a tree that is about to collapse. A society cannot exist with the inequalities we have. For every strawberry I can pick by just stepping outside there is a syringe discarded in a desolate tower-block. For every new-potato I dig up there is an abortion happening in some dubious doctor's establishment in the East End. The world has to be changed so that everybody, regardless of their creed, colour, race, sex, or sexual orientation can have equal opportunities, rights and happiness.

I attended Nick's funeral in Amersham, along with several members of the Morris Society committee. On the back of the service sheet was the illustration which appears on the cover of this issue of the *Journal*.