

Citation for the Award of Gold Badge to Sean Goddard 9 March 2024

It was with great pleasure that I accepted the invitation to prepare and deliver this citation for the award of the English Folk Dance and Song Society's prestigious Gold Badge to Sean. The Gold Badge is a rare distinction only awarded to those who have made an outstanding contribution to the folk arts in England. And Sean has certainly done that. Across dance, music and song, as a performer, teacher, and researcher, he has been and continues to be an unwavering, enthusiastic and knowledgeable champion of English folk culture.

So, where did this passion spring from? In true traditional fashion, it appears to have been passed from father to son. At the tender age of five, Sean was taken by his parents to the Keymer Folk Dance Club, where his pathway into the world of folk dancing was cemented. No doubt literally following his father's footsteps, Sean began to call dances in 1976. His first full evening of calling was at the Keymer club and his debut for public dances in Eastbourne when he was just 14 years old. True, he has some more years to go in order to equal his father's record of almost 60 years as a barn and folk dance caller. But thanks to his early start, Sean can already claim almost five decades. Together with Chris Jewell and James Barry, Sean seized the opportunity in 1976 to reinvigorate the repertoire by introducing newer music and dances at Keymer when long standing founders Hal and Joyce Wallis retired from their organisational role. Sean's growing expertise led him, starting in 1983, to become a regular caller with the legendary band The Rakes whose tunes and playing style owed much to local musicians and the Irish community. This engagement expanded Sean's range and understanding of how dance music should be played beyond that then in vogue at EFDSS dances. Sean's breadth of interest in folk dance and music, as fellow musician Simon Buck testifies, has resulted in his equal authority whether calling at English, Irish or Scottish ceilidhs. Regular bookings at folk dance clubs across Sussex, Surrey and Kent since 1982 to date demonstrate Sean's well-deserved high reputation as a caller to communities in the South-East.

In the late 1970s a contact at the University of Sussex brought fresh opportunities to participate in music making and morris dancing. In 1979 Sean joined the University of Sussex Morris Men (known as Brighton Morris Men from 1981) and over the next twenty-four years he added to his roles as dancer and musician, that of Bagman (1982), Squire (1983) and Foreman (1986). From 1994 to the present day, he has been a member of Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men, serving twice as Squire (1997-99; 2019-21), as Captain (2004-19) and latterly as lead musician. His philosophy of inclusion, finding a role for all, has helped to secure the continuity of this team which has been in existence for 70 years. Similarly, Sean has taken a lead in once again helping to revitalise Keymer Folk Dance Club, being elected as Chair and Leader in 2022 and starting a mentoring scheme to develop new and existing callers. Reaching out to young people, from 1998 to 2006, he taught morris stick dances to Brighton College students for their annual Shakespeare productions –and they received standing ovations at every performance !

Sean's activities as a folk musician not only include playing for morris but also successful initiatives in creating long-standing social dance bands. In 1982 with fellow morris dancers, he co-founded the Scratch and Gutter Ceilidh Band. Now known as the Moves Afoot Barn Dance Band, it is still performing at weddings and local organisation dances some forty-two years later. In addition, Sean's own two, sometimes three-piece Fiveways Ceilidh Band has performed since 2010, bringing folk music and dance to new audiences in and around Brighton at street parties, in parks and church and village halls .

Sean's unstinting curiosity and tireless involvement in folk dance and music led him in the early 1980s towards historical investigations and deepening research interests. Key influences occurred at the University of Sussex where he was employed as a librarian from 1983. There he met informally with the late Alun Howkins and Vic Gammon. Alun in particular encouraged him to undertake small scale localised research with a view to publishing in English Dance and Song. Further stimulation to undertake research came from the Traditional Dance conferences of the early 1980s; as well as long into the night discussions with Reg Hall and the late Michael Plunkett, following gigs with the Rakes in London. In 1989, Sean's research bore fruit in an early piece 'Folk Songs from Sussex' which appeared in the American journal Country Dance and Song. This was followed over the years by numerous articles in English Dance and Song, including his findings on the history of Brighton and Hove's folk dance clubs, a study facilitated by the Elsie Whiteman Award granted to him by the Sussex District of EFDSS in 1983. Keen to communicate and promote understanding and knowledge about local folk activities, Sean organised a series of folklore lectures in 1992 for the Sussex District Committee of which he has been a member since 1985. He also helped to disseminate information on local folk arts by joining regional magazine Sussex Pie as a temporary joint editor in 1994, and interviewing key folk personalities in the area for the publication. Working to ensure the publication's continuity and outreach, in 2021 he took on the role of editor in its transition to digital form and expansion of content. Over the past two decades, Sean has also written a series of articles on well-known social dances for the Society of Folk Dance Historians (2000-2017), the Morris Tradition book for the Morris Ring (2004), and a co-authored piece in English Dance and Song on the award of a University of Sussex honorary master's degree to Bob Copper . His expertise as a professional librarian has been to the fore in the transfer of the late Michael Plunkett's collection of over 2000 78rpm records from Sussex to the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library

In 2012, Sean began the first of his own two master's qualifications – an MA in Information Studies at the University of Brighton. Not surprisingly he concentrated his study on folk dance and music, through a dissertation on how to advance the public profile of the Halsway Manor Library. A number of his recommendations have since been put into practice. Sean's second MA, begun in 2017 focused on the History of Folk Dance, findings from which Sean has shared at various conferences organised and published by EFDSS. Again, demonstrating his commitment to Sussex folk, Sean brought to light the neglected Song Book compiled around 1820 by Sylvan Harmer, a resident of nearby Heathfield. Sean's supervisor at the University of Brighton Dr Paula Hearsurn found him to be "a model music researcher to supervise – clear vision, committed and driven to his research field". Driven Sean certainly is, as he went on in 2022 to begin a doctorate at the University of Sussex, this time exploring the historical relation between recorded folk dance music and the repertoire of EFDSS. We await some more of his quietly revolutionary discoveries!

There can be no doubt that Sean is a more than worthy recipient of the EFDSS's Gold Badge! So many have benefitted from his gentle encouragement and unswerving commitment to advancing knowledge, participation and pleasure in the folk dance, song and music of England – and always carried out without ego but with genuine belief and passion. May you long continue Sean!

On behalf of the EFDSS, I would like to invite you to step up to receive your Gold Badge.

Citation prepared and delivered by Theresa Buckland