

GOLD BADGE: Madeleine Smith

Madeleine was introduced to folk at the Leyland Folk Dance Club in Lancashire in the early 1970s, and her life changed forever. The club was run by an inspirational teacher, Hilda Ratcliffe, who taught morris and sword, as well as country dancing.

Madeleine's love of folk dance and music was nurtured by Hilda, Ethyl Anderson, Pat Shaw, Tom Cook, and many others, and she was encouraged to take up calling and teaching. Ethyl was the EFDSS Northwest area representative, who organised workshops, courses, and a brilliant summer school at Burton Manor in the Wirral, with expert tutors and great musicians. Jim Coleman and Denis Smith were the first of many wonderful dance musicians whose expertise in bringing the dances to life led to her putting music at the centre of her calling and teaching. She has taken the mantra 'dance is music made visible' (Maud Karpeles) from Tom Cook.

When Hilda retired, she entrusted the Leyland Club to Madeleine, and this is where she honed her teaching skills. Most of the club had been dancing much longer than she had, and one of the members was deputed to phone with feedback every week, so she had to get it right!

In those days, there was little division between what are now termed ceilidh and social dance, and Madeleine joined in everything with enthusiasm, and also called across the board, which she continues to do to this day. She is equally happy calling for complete beginners and leading advanced dance workshops, plus everything in between.

She has become renowned for her clear and friendly teaching style, and for enhancing workshops with her wide knowledge of country dancing and its historical context. She is also known for her love of traditional dances with appropriate stepping. She always emphasises style and technique and is adept at slipping in an element of teaching under the radar.

She often creates dances 'on the hoof' while calling, particularly for children and beginners. She has also written some more complex dances. Her 'Connoisseurs' Contra' and 'A Dolphin in Broadstairs' are both widely danced.

She moved to Oxfordshire in the 1980s, joining another welcoming folk community and calling across a wide area as well participating in many folk activities close to home. She runs a small, but enthusiastic, dance club in her local village of Chinnor, and feels the wheel has gone full circle using the skills handed on by Hilda all those years ago. She plays piano in the local Towersey Folk Dance Club band, is one of the club callers, and played recorder for Towersey Morris, a Cotswold side, for many years, following in the footsteps of her elder son Vic. She helped found Towersey Village Voices Community Choir twelve years ago, which goes from strength to strength, and participates enthusiastically in local events.

She has always aimed to go back to sources and learn from experienced teachers and researchers, as well as doing her own research, and to pass on her knowledge to dancers and callers both locally and at a national level. Where possible, she invited the experts to lead local events, and Leyland benefited from teaching by Margery Fennessey, step dance

collectors Anne Marie Hulme and Peter Clifton, and famous New England callers Ted Sannella and Roger Whynot.

Similarly, Village Voices has invited local choirs to workshops and concerts with Sandra Kerr, Moira Craig and Carolyn Robson, Jess and Richard Arrowsmith (on Zoom in lockdown), Paul Sartin, Janet Russell, John Kirkpatrick, and Jackie Oates.

In Chinnor, she set up annual interactive music workshops, 'Beyond the Tune', exploring different aspects of playing folk music, with expert teachers Moira and Peter Gutteridge. It was Moira who inspired Madeleine to take up the Celtic harp, and provided her with her first lap harp, which is now in turn lent out to budding harpers. Madeleine also liaised with Moira and Peter on running 'Beyond the Tune' courses at Halsway Manor.

It was at Burton Manor that she first encountered Lancashire clog dancing, then was introduced to Westmorland clog by Jane and Lindsay Flett at one of Ethyl's workshops. This was during a big renaissance of clog dancing, and she was lucky to be in the right place at the right time when the legendary Sam Sherry started classes. His first pupils were very much guinea pigs. He would rattle through a complicated step, and the class would help him painstakingly break it down into teachable components. Some of his pupils would perform with him at folk festivals and help with the teaching, and Madeleine taught his beginners' class in Preston for several years. Madeleine says: "Performing with Sam was always a bit of a minefield, as he was prone to extemporise in the middle of a routine, and it always looked as if we had gone wrong. But it was always fun, and I have fond memories of dancing on a haycart with Sam at Laycock, in the days when Chippenham festival decamped to the National Trust village for a day. The MC was Hugh Rippon, another great mentor."

Sam founded a clog competition at the Fylde Festival, and Madeleine was the first winner of the Waltz Cup, with musician Rod Stradling, dancing a complex routine of her own steps. She has always enjoyed creating routines and passing them on. As well as the more usual hornpipe and waltz rhythms, she composed a slip jig routine for Broadstairs Folk Week clog workshops.

The famous Lancashire dancer Pat Tracey was another major influence. She and Madeleine met at a folk festival, and they spent many happy hours swapping steps on their clog boards at the campsite and became firm friends. Pat single handedly kept alive the 'Old Lancs' heel and toe style of dancing. Madeleine visited Pat several times to learn her steps, and organised a workshop day with Pat in Leyland. One of the highlights of her career was helping Pat teach a group of actors at the Old Vic. The play was 'Sergeant Musgrave's Dance' by John Arden, which features a clog dance. It was produced by Albert Finney in 1984, with music by John Tams. The company also included Alun Armstrong, Eileen Atkins and Sam Sherry.

She collected the steps of Lancashire barge dancer, Bill Gibbons of Burscough, then in his late seventies, by going to tea with him every week and watching him rattle away in his kitchen. There was no hope of breaking the steps down slowly, but she gradually worked them out, dancing them for Bill until he was satisfied, and the steps had to be exactly right. Bill had tried to pass them on before and was thrilled that they were now accessible

and loved watching people dancing them. He performed with a natural grace and rhythm, fitting the unphrased steps to whatever hornpipe was being played. Madeleine and Sam Sherry were the researchers for the archival film of Bill made by Barry Callaghan in 1980.

A group of Sam's pupils got together with Bill in Madeleine's kitchen to learn Bill's 'Irish Jig', a country dance in clogs with unusual steps and figures. This was the beginning of the Lancashire Wallopers clog team, and they went with Bill and musician Rod Stradling to dance the Irish Jig at the Albert Hall Festival.

When her children were small, Madeleine started "Totsmusic": pre-school music and movement sessions in different locations and for different age groups. It went on to run successfully for 15 years, with the mums and dads now passing the songs on to their grandchildren. Madeleine comments: "It had a beneficial influence on my calling as coping with recalcitrant dancers is nothing compared with masses of two year olds tearing around! You have to be absolutely in control and keep your activities and songs moving along."

She also ran children's dance sessions at the Isle of Wight Easter folk holidays and Broadstairs Folk Week for many years.

She has been the dance organiser at Broadstairs since 2006, and the clog workshop leader until recently. Her mission has always been to make the dancing inclusive and accessible, and this has been very successful, with a 'jargon buster' in the programme every year to encourage people to join in. Broadstairs also pioneered the first 'Callaround', encouraging budding callers to have a go, mentored by the festival callers, and underpinned with callers' workshops.

Lockdown posed new challenges. Madeleine went for long walks and worked out Zoom versions of country dances. She organised regular virtual meetings of Towersey and Chinnor dance clubs, and called several big dances with dancers from many countries, some using live music from other locations.

Madeleine served on the National Executive Committee of EFDSS in the early 1980s and was also chair of the Academic Services Committee.

Madeleine writes:

The presentation was made at a big party on 18 March 2023 at my local village hall in Chinnor, with an afternoon dance and an evening ceilidh. Friends came from far and wide. Mary Walter of Towersey Folk Dance Club read the citation, and Hazel Miller, chair of Chiltern Folk Association and former CEO of EFDSS, presented the badge.

I had a wonderful day, thanks to all my friends and my two lovely sons, Vic and Ed. Mic Spenceley and Malcom Bright were the MCs, co-ordinating the callers and the ceilidh spots. My elder son Vic led the musicians, with Bill Keys, Meg Winters and Thomas Bending joining him to form the core band. Lots of others also played, including Lin Hetherington (Ranchers) and Roger Wilkins (Falconers). It was a great sound, good for listening and dancing. We

enjoyed old favourites such as Dorset Four Hand Reel, Devil's Dream, Levi Jackson Rag, La Russe, Duke of Kent's Waltz, as well as a mix of modern, Playford and other ceilidh dances. Judith Inman kindly called my dance 'Connoisseurs' Contra', and Lesley Thackeray gave a superb performance of my slip jig clog routine during the afternoon, accompanied by her husband Ben.

My lovely local folkies organised all the things that helped to make it a brilliant party: food, drink, hall decoration, setting up and clearing away.

We had a variety of ceilidh spots – too many to list them all. Sarah Westcott, the leader of Towersey Village Voices wrote a special song for me, which the choir performed con brio to great acclaim. Towersey Horseshoes Morris led everyone in an energetic Shepherd's Hey. Young friends Ellie and Henry Ruddock sang, with Ellie's 3-year-old daughter Josie stealing the show. We had some wonderful Ukrainian music, including a magical hammer dulcimer performance.

Thank you EFDSS for awarding me the badge.