



Mike Norris

Mike Norris was destined to have a life-long interest in folk music. He was born in St Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth, where folk song was part of the fabric of the building; the hospital having been a former workhouse whose early 20th century inhabitants had provided folk song collector, George Gardiner, with 100 songs.

Growing up in a port town, the young Mike's introduction to folk song was learning sea shanties at primary school but in his teenage years it was the American folk singers, including Bob Dylan, whose music he followed. He also started to attend his local folk club.

In 1974 the adult Mike moved to Suffolk as a founder member of a commune in East Bergholt, where he also re-engaged with English folk music at the Red Lion pub in Woodbridge at which Taffy Thomas was a regular.

Mike became increasingly involved in the folk music scene in Suffolk attending sessions at the Blaxhall Ship, the Butley Oyster, and the Golden Key. He helped to run the Butley Oyster for a few years, joined the Board of Felixstowe Folk Festival, and supported Steve and Mary Dickinson when they successfully revived the Everyman Folk Club. In the early 1990s Mike promoted folk gigs in Ipswich, booking such acts as The Levellers, Dick Gaughan, Steve Tilson and Maggie Boyle.

In 1992 Mike started working in London, becoming involved in its folk scene and attended Sharp's Folk Club at Cecil Sharp House for the first time. Through this engagement he became increasingly aware of the work of EFDSS and events at the House. Having married Linda in 1998, Mike moved to London full-time and from then on became a regular attendee at Sharp's and other London clubs.

In 2005 he joined the EFDSS Board and was subsequently elected as Vice Chair. The Chair resigned a year later and Mike found himself elected as Chair. Two weeks after this a terrified Mike presented Eliza Carthy with her own Gold Badge award on stage of the Royal Albert Hall!

At this time EFDSS was a dwindling organisation, commanding little respect in the folk world, particularly within the folk music sector. Led by Mike, the Board decided to radically re-structure the organisation from the top down. Deciding that the organisation should be led by arts professionals, redundancies and a board shake up was necessary to move the organisation forward. Mike completed a very successful term of office in 2011 leaving EFDSS a significantly different organisation from the one he had joined in 2005.

Mike's involvement with EFDSS and Cecil Sharp House continues; he helps to run Sharp's folk club, organises and presents a monthly Trad Night at the House and his long running radio programme, *Classic Folk*, continues through the EFDSS website.

Sandra Kerr presented Mike Norris with his Gold Badge at an award ceremony at Cecil Sharp House in February 2020. His citation was written by Katy Spicer with assistance from Linda Chaplin.