Gold Badge Citation - Dave Leverton

The presentation, by EFDSS Board member Sherry Neyhus, took place during a National Youth Folklore Troupe of England (NYFTE) performance at the Chippenham Folk Festival on 24 May 2015. The citation was written and read by **Rhodri Davies***.*

Dave Leverton is a social and morris dancer, caller and musician, but it is principally for his impact as a volunteer youth leader that Dave has been recognised by the award of an EFDSS Gold Badge.

Dave first became involved folk activities for young people when, at the age of 16, he was persuaded to give a performance at a Hobby Horse Club. He went on to organise the Hobby Horse Club in the Bristol area and became South-West Area Representative for the EFDSS. His greatest contribution, however, has been as the long-term Director of the National Youth Folklore Troupe of England (NYFTE) which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. Dave was involved in the establishment of this group in 1990 and, after four years, became the leader.

NYFTE gives committed young people the opportunity to explore their folk heritage including social and morris dance, clogging, rapper, long sword, singing and music. Dave has always been strongly committed to covering all aspects of English tradition, seeking to accentuate the unique aspects of each style as well as encouraging the young people to bring their own personality and polish to a performance and helping them to make the traditions their own. Many EFDSS members will have seen their performances at festivals throughout the country, and particularly at Chippenham Folk Festival with which the group is closely associated and where the young people themselves teach as part of the children's festival. Current members of NYFTE are holders of awards from the Sidmouth Jig Competition and Dancing England Rapper Tournament.

Members of the team develop wider life skills such as independence, resilience, confidence and responsibility and carry away friendships that last long after they are required to retire from the team at the age of 18. Ex-members of the team can be found on the current folk circuit as callers, members of many morris teams, musicians in social dance and ceilidh bands and people who just participate in and enjoy folk.

Anyone with children of their own will appreciate how much hard work it can be to cope with one or two teenagers, let alone thirty at a time, and hundreds over the 25 years that the team has existed. Imagine the prospect of giving up every Easter to bring the team together for an intensive week of training that is the basis of their performances for the rest of the year. Whilst NYFTE has an able group of leaders, including Dave's wife Heather, Dave himself takes the lead teaching, encouraging and setting the tone which has made it a success. It is the nature of the organisation that when the children retire their parents move on as well, but Dave has lasted well beyond the involvement of his own children and has continued to be the institutional memory and heart of the organisation. His stamina is impressive!

The ethos of the team is to involve the young people in a significant number of the decisions; older members are encouraged to take on aspects of the teaching and responsibility for effective performances, finding confidence and maturity as they do so.

To build an atmosphere where children positively enjoy participating in folk traditions when most of the teenage world is either not aware of them or sees them as deeply unfashionable; to teach skills which lead to acclaimed performances; to nurture life skills that can be applied outside the folk sphere; to obtain the respect, trust and friendship of the parents; to create a group within which there are strong bonds of friendship that last outside the few weekends each year that the team meet and outside an individual's direct involvement in the team; to let teenagers find a commitment to the folk arts to the point where they carry that outside the confines of the team - these are achievements that Dave has demonstrated through his steady hand, delegation of responsibility and guidance.

All those of us who share a pride in and enjoyment of folk owe Dave a profound debt of gratitude for playing an important part in handing that heritage on to the next generation. For this Dave is worthy of an EFDSS Gold Badge.

Rhodri Davies is a dance caller and father of two current members of the NYFTE team.

The citation on the day was made in terms of a humorous prosecution, with Dave accused of subverting the youth of the nation by getting them involved in folk arts. The jury consisting of team members and the audience convicted him.