Gold Badge award – John Tams

Singer, writer, producer and actor John Tams was presented with his EFDSS Gold Badge live on air during a special feature on Mark Radcliffe's BBC Radio 2 Folk Show.

Tams discussed starting out in the folk clubs of the North West and a life that has encompassed music, stage and screen.

Born in Derbyshire in 1949, Tams left school at the age of 15, "uneducated, uncertificated and just hopeless", he told Radcliffe.

His first foray into music was as a member of a local village brass band where he played the e-flat horn, before becoming interested in folk music and getting heavily involved in the folk clubs around Derbyshire.

"In those days you could play Manchester for a fortnight and never leave the city limits," Tams recollected.

The 1970s saw Tams playing with Derbyshire folk group Muckram Wakes and The Albion Band, as well as accompanying Ashley Hutchings on a number of albums.

A keen music collector, Tams also spent a long stint in Ireland during the seventies, recording many albums-worth of performances by traditional Irish musicians.

Tams also enjoyed a successful career as an actor and musical director at the National Theatre for a decade, where he said his experience of folk clubs gave him the confidence to perform to an audience which was often just an arms-length away.

His time at the National saw him involved in many productions including The Crucible, Lark Rise to Candleford and the critically acclaimed War Horse.

Television credits include five years on ITV drama Sharpe, for which he also provided music.

The presentation of the EFDSS Gold Badge was the latest in a long line of recognition which has included six BBC Radio Two folk awards.

You can hear John Tams interviewed by Mark Radcliffe by going to www.efdss.org/gold-badge