



Citation for Dave and Maggie Hunt

It is unlikely that the people assembled here in Abbots Bromley will not know of Dave and Maggie Hunt and have some appreciation of their status not only in the folk world but also on its fringes. This Gold Badge Award gives us the opportunity to look back on two varied careers that have, separately and together, brought richness to folk music and community arts over many years. It also provides the opportunity to learn things about the two of them that perhaps were not apparent because you've only come across them in one of their guises.

In the words of a non-folk song, 'Let's start at the very beginning – a very good place to start!'

Like many of us, Dave came to folk music in the 50s via Skiffle, and given its relationship to American folk music there was a natural progression to English folk music and that of its neighbours. The CND marches of his youth also provided a basic repertoire, but early exposure, via work at the Edinburgh Festival, to the likes of Rae and Archie Fisher, Bobby Campbell and Gordie McCulloch, Hamish Imlach, Norman Kennedy, and more started to broaden his knowledge.

As an early attendee in 1963 of Wolverhampton's Giffard Folk Club (he went to its second meeting for the princely entrance donation of 6d – six old pence) he soon graduated to resident status and then on to the committee of a club that was the starting point for all manner of folk activity, as we will see. Any of us who organised clubs in those days will be familiar with the catalogue of traditional performers that graced the club's posters. From Ireland there was The McPeake Family, piper Felix Doran and Family, our old friend Packie Byrne – and the legendary Margaret Barrie and Michael Gorman.

From Scotland came The Stewarts of Blairgowrie. Lizzie Higgins, Jimmy McBeath – from England Stan Hugill, Fred Jordan, Bob Cann, barge skipper Bob Roberts and more – and the American and World Music



guests even included Jesse Fuller and Ravi Shankar, for whom they had to book the library because he wouldn't play in a pub.

Dave says: *The first time we booked Alex Campbell – "If you get drunk you won't be paid" OK – he came several times and always said 'I love coming here – I don't have to play Alex the drunk, and get chance to sing the good stuff I don't usually do' and he was wonderful!*

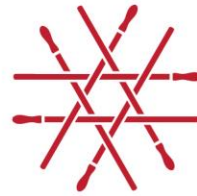
Then came a residency at La Boheme Coffee bar folk club in Birmingham, which he took over and ran when organisers Rosemary and Hugh Gentleman left the area. He also founded a folk club at his work place – Birmingham University.

As the 60s rolled on he went to Keele Folk Festival which became the National Festival – a beacon on the horizon of the traditional folk scene. Perhaps you saw the Abbots Bromley Horn Dancers today. They went to Keele one year as did Dave.

He says: *I went out of the hall to get drinks – outside, Abbots Bromley HD were waiting to go on – "Here Dave – we're short of a Maid Marion – you know it, put this costume on" Returned to hall in blue dress, gold crown and white veil – much to amazement of thirsty mates! Very honoured to be asked.*

In 1968 he was a founder member of Giffard Morris and served as Squire for ten years in total. They performed Cotswold, rapper, longsword, mumming and organised a Morris Ring meeting. In the early 70s he also danced with Birmingham's Jockey Morris and played with Earlsdon Musicians. We can complete an overview of his morris career with a move to Telford in 1977 where he joined the Ironmen, originally a Cotswold team and then one of four teams that sparked the revival in Border Morris. His membership lasted 38 years – Squire, Foreman, Band Leader and on occasion, clog repairer.

When we associate Dave with the ceilidh scene we quite naturally think of him as a caller but it wasn't always so. The monthly Giffard Ceilidhs of the early 1970s saw Dave in the house band, Corn Rigs, as the



drummer. It was in 1975 that he started calling and was immediately in demand. By 1977 Rod Stradling had recruited him as the regular caller with The Old Swan Band and he remained the band's caller of choice until he called his last gig, with Old Swan, at C#H in November 2017. Over the years he has called for more than 200 bands, all of which were superb (he says, tongue in cheek).

If you were a child in the late 70s, you would probably know Dave in the guise of Doctor Sunshine. Formed as a folk club and festival act in 1976 in duo with guitarist and Giffard Arms resident Vic Baker, otherwise known as Professor Wingnut, Dr Sunshine's Pavement Show, distinctive in red and yellow, delighted us all with Music Hall type antics daft songs, fire eating, escapology, magic, all delivered with oceans of imagination. It must be noted that Professor Wingnut (Dudley Vic) belonged to a category of people who should never wear tights – which of course he did. Many people have abiding memories of their two man mummer's play, two man sword dance, and a morris dance with Dave as musician playing for Dudley Vic and 5 imaginary dancers. My own favourite would be the Chelsea Pensioner's sketch.

The adult show was quickly augmented with a large portfolio of children's workshop activities, during which they enthralled, encouraged, educated and enabled thousands of youngsters with giants, shadow puppets, rod theatres, lanterns, junk puppets and junk instruments plus all manner of traditional dance and song. There are many middle-aged folkies today that look back on those times as an important part of their growing up.

By the time Vic died in 1999, sadly taken by cancer, Maggie was well ensconced in the fabric of Dave's life, having moved to Telford in 1991 to join him, and it was a natural progression to carry on the work with the a new outfit called Sunshine Arts.

However, to pick up Maggie's story we must go back to the 1960s. In the fertile folkiness of Birmingham she went to folk song clubs including The Jug of Punch, the Old Crown and the club at her Alma Mater, Aston University. After a PhD in Bradford she ended up in Manchester where her then partner Des Miller introduced her to the more traditional music



and also to John and Katie Howson who provided a pathway to lots of the old singers, as they have for all of us. She was later able to return the compliment when she introduced John Howson to The Staithes Fisherman's Choir that she knew because she had a holiday cottage in that beautiful little Yorkshire fishing village. John put out a recording of the choir in his Veteran label and appearances at The Queen Elizabeth Hall and The National Festival were to follow. Maggie brokered introductions between the choir and various people including one between Norma Waterson and venerable choir member Willie Wright. His version of the song, 'Sleep on Beloved' which was still used in Staithes as a lowering down hymn at funerals, later appeared on the Waterson:Carthy album of 1994. Maggie's involvement with Staithes included field interviews with choir members and community arts projects around the village's traditional Lifeboat Day.

Just five or six miles up the coast, Maggie has also been involved in the huge Skinningrove Bonfires – another Community Arts programme – from the first one in 1980 onwards. During many years of work with locals and children, one of her roles was fusing the fireworks (in the Methodist church hall and carrying them down to beach!) She continues to go up for a week prior to the bonfire.

In 1986, her work as a geneticist took her to Norwich. Given their shared interest in folk, their paths must have been regularly crossing at festivals, including this one, the English Country Music Weekend, but a chance meeting at a genetics conference dance where Dave was the caller was what finally brought them together. They married in 1991 and she moved to join him in Telford, joining Dr Sunshine's at the same time.

Now working as a locum and based wherever she was needed, Maggie's travel schedule to get to festival gigs involved a very complex rail ticketing system. Nevertheless, the next few years saw Dave and Maggie involved both together and separately with many festival projects. On Vic Baker's death, commemorated by a Wingnut shaped children's bench at Sidmouth's Knowle, the newly branded Sunshine Arts took on a variety of projects. Often a weekend festival booking would be preceded by a week of work in schools, undertaken by Dave and leading to children's



participation at the festival itself. Maggie and Dave jointly ran the Children's Festivals at Bridgnorth, Towersey, Beverley, Festival At The edge as well as contributing at Warwick, Sidmouth, Dartmoor and other festivals. Another very important job was as joint directors of the Children's Festival at Shrewsbury with Maggie also running the Youth Festival.

Dave had retired some time earlier but Maggie's retirement in 2008 must have been a relief as it is a miracle that either of them ever had time to go to work.

There is much more to list but it would be tedious repetition and I think you have the idea by now. Perhaps a mention of Maggie's major project funded by an Age Concern Millennium Award will not go amiss. The aim was to enrich the understanding of young people in the mining history of East Shropshire. Working with schools, retired miners and old people, history was brought to life through song writing workshops with Bill Caddick, storytelling with Sal Tonge, oral history recordings and the making of a pottery tile plaque commemorating a local mining disaster. There were a series of community concerts and an interactive CD ROM was produced.

It's clear that together and separately they have had a truly remarkable effect on the folk scene for people of all ages. Dave in particular has had a habit of popping up in unexpected places – as a Gulliver with Minehead Hobby Horse, as Winster Morris's Queen at Bampton, and the aforementioned Maid Marion for Abbot's Bromley Horn Dancers. Dave's loudly delivered pub room renditions of Buddy Holly hits accompanied by melodeon contrast completely with Maggie's occasional quiet rendering of what must be her favourite song – Stowbro – a song I have heard her sing several times in the saloon of our holiday chartered Thames sailing barge. Between these two extremes lie years of varied and influential contributions to our treasured folk scene. I think it's obvious that this prestigious Gold Badge Award is fully deserved.

Let's honour – Dave and Maggie Hunt.



Johnny Adams

Johnny Adams is himself a recipient of the Gold Badge award. Over 50 years he has performed with The Druids, Muckram Wakes, The New Victory Band, Red Shift, The Old Swan Band and others. As a recording artist and record producer he has a discography of over fifty albums. As well as serving on the EFDSS board in the past, he is the co-director of The Village Music Project, the director of the Folkopedia project and the online admin for the Tradsong and Tradtunes discussion groups.



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