

The EFA Mission

County-wide coordination of folk activities in Essex perhaps started with the County branches of the EFDSS in the 1930s. In the 1950s the EFDSS reorganised and District committees were set up, including the committee for Essex. These committees were integral parts of the Society and so shared the aims and objects of the national Society as set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association. Many aims are listed covering the performance and preservation of folk music song and dance, research, etc., but as is inevitable for any organisation not all of the aims could be pursued with equal vigour and priority at all times, dependent on the skills and finance available, and the priorities were steered from time to time by decisions of the Director and the national executive committee.

As the years went by circumstances changed and eventually the EFDSS broke the formal links with the District and Area organisations, freeing up local finances and activities. In Essex, as in other counties, independent folk associations were set up, expanding their coordinating role to wider folk music and similar activities, not limited to those which might have been considered to be within the scope of the EFDSS. Essentially though the intention was to continue to provide useful functions which were beyond the scope of individual clubs or groups.

Recently the committee of the Essex Folk Association (EFA) recognised the advantages of becoming a registered charity. This carries with it some additional obligations and the committee members are now the charity trustees, but has the advantages of being recognised and of ensuring that the EFA funds will be used wholly for the development of “folk” in Essex and surrounding areas.

The objects of the EFA may now be found on the Charity Commission website. They are:

To advance the education of the general public by encouraging amongst particularly but not exclusively the people of south east England (by which expression is meant the administrative areas of the counties of Essex, Kent, Hertfordshire, Suffolk and including the London postal districts) awareness, knowledge, understanding, conservation and appreciation of, and participation in, the folk arts to include but without being limited to the arts of traditional music, song, dance, drama, story telling and related folklore and customs which particularly but not exclusively originate in England or which have been brought to England by communities who have settled here.

To meet these objects EFA publishes the quarterly magazine EFN, runs workshops, seeks to run major events alongside but not competing with those organised by local clubs or groups, and aims to provide some assistance where needed for local clubs, particularly those starting or trying new ventures.

However, the committee felt that it would be desirable to clarify its priorities, within the resources which are offered by its members, and, following the lead of very many business organisations, has agreed a mission statement to focus the work for the next period. A mission statement may of course be changed as circumstances and needs change in the future.

Our Mission Statement is:

The Essex Folk Association seeks to promote the participation in and the appreciation of the folk arts within Essex and surrounding areas by:

Publishing a regular magazine as a resource for details of forthcoming events and other information, providing the magazine to members and to libraries and other reference centres.

Organising workshops and folk events where these are beyond the scope of local clubs and organisations.

Providing information and advice, to the extent possible, on matters relating to the folk arts and their organisation.