David Atkinson

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David Atkinson is one of the great unsung heroes in the world of folk song scholarship. Editor of the Folk Music Journal since 2009, he has also produced a significant body of research, and has an international reputation. After gaining a degree in Zoology from Oxford University, David changed course and took both a B.A. and Ph.D. English language at Birkbeck College, supporting himself by working as a van driver. Exposed to folk song through various London folk clubs, his literary leanings led him to a fascination for traditional ballads, in which he became an expert. He has made multiple contributions to the International Ballad Conferences organised by the Kommission fur Volksdichtung, travelling regularly to meetings in such exotic places as Lubljana, Kyiv, Minsk, Istanbul and Austin (Texas) and becoming Executive Secretary, a post he has held since 2011. The society's president Professor Marjetka Golež Kaučic says: 'At our first meeting I could see that he was an outstanding theoretician and connoisseur of the English ballad tradition. David absolutely deserves this award.'

David has published many scholarly articles and in 2002 he produced his first book, *The English Traditional Ballad: Theory, Method, and Practice*, an important contribution to the understanding of balladry specifically in England. One reviewer, Dr. Tom McKean of Aberdeen University, praised its 'meticulous case studies', and rated it 'an essential resource.' Another book that challenged established theory on ballads. was *The Anglo-Scottish Ballad and its Imaginary Contexts*, which won the Folklore Society's Katharine Briggs Award in 2014. David was for several years an honorary research fellow at the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, and a key member of the team cataloguing the sprawling collection of the American folklorist James Madison Carpenter.

An early adopter of ideas concerning the origin in print of many folk songs, David's research in recent times has focussed on the interaction between the written and oral transmission of ballads, a field in which he has become a significant pioneer, exploring it in further books such as *The Ballad and its Pasts*. Over the last few years, he has

forged a formidable collaboration with Steve Roud, producing volumes such as *Street Ballads in Nineteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and North America*. David is also editor-in-chief for the 'Ballad Partners' co-operative, dedicated to the publication of specialist research including the recent biography of Cecil Sharp. Under David's stewardship, the *Folk Music Journal* has maintained the highest standards in scholarship, style and presentation, as would be expected from a professional editor and indexer, who receives commissions from many major publishing houses. As Steve Roud says, 'David is one of the best, and many publications would never see the light of day without his dedication and firm hand.' David Atkinson's contributions to our field are many and distinguished, and there could scarcely be a more deserving recipient of the Gold Badge award.