MALCOLM TAYLOR
GOLD BADGE CITATION BY DOC ROWE
2005

We are here this evening to celebrate and honour the memory of Bob Copper - as remarkable and as gentle a man as ever lived.
Bob, I know, would appreciate and see it very apt that we take time out also to pay tribute to another man who has so generously given of his time, his enthusiasm and knowledge.

Indeed, had this award been given a year or two earlier, I am certain that it would have been Bob himself standing here and - more eloquently - applaud the work of Malcolm Taylor. OBE and Librarian of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

We must say that we are not just celebrating Malcolm's twenty-five years of service to the EFDSS since I am sure there can be few of us here that have not, directly or indirectly, benefited from his work in the Library. In fact there are many of you - all of you, perhaps - that would dearly wish to take my place and present your own tribute....so It is, therefore, both an honour and privilege for me to have been asked to give this citation tonight

This, of course, could fall somewhere between "This is your Life " and a 'best man' speech - I apologise for that .... but I do know I have the essential gold item somewhere about my person!

I am able to speak personally of working with this man over the quarter century - half his actual life span, in fact - and I recall meeting him on his second day in the post imparting words of wisdom … Despite that, we still speak together and have worked on numerous projects together. Most notable was the education series for EFDSS in the 1990s. It was there I did the initial writing and he then read and edited my, oft-times over-indulgent or enthusiastic, text. I shall, therefore, enjoy this opportunity of not having my words overseen - and I may say what I wish on this occasion.

We should, perhaps, initially extend our sincere gratitude to Deptford Library for their poor selection of pop music … for it was there that a young Malcolm Taylor - who was into prog-rock [whatever that is?] - discovered a reasonable folk collection and was soon borrowing records of Martin Carthy, Bob Dylan, Shirley and Dolly Collins … and perhaps, most importantly, the Caedmon series of *Folk Songs of Britain*. It was hearing these field recordings, and especially a performance of the Nutting Girl by Cyril Poacher, that assured his future interest in this traditional culture.

A second thanks must go to Tony Connell, an Australian who was working for a while as assistant librarian at the House. Malcolm's recalls an early visit to the library as a student when, he said that Tony "sized him up" and obviously felt he was "worth spending more than five minutes with".
"He dragged me up to the sound library and made me watch the Barley Mow - The

‘Blaxhall Ship’ film.... It made me realise that it wasn’t people in recording studios - it was about something else.”

The ‘something else’ was the social context of the recorded material and what the likes of Sam Larner, Harry Cox and Walter Pardon were nurturing and handing on to others. Here then was a touchstone for the future Librarian.

Malcolm Howard Taylor Joined the Society as assistant librarian in 1979, after obtaining his BA and professional Librarianship qualifications...and a time-honoured short spell of unemployment. He was clearly tailor made for the post , since he had not only made his specialist subject Folk Music, he had also attempted to formulate a classification scheme for folk music. This turned out to be - in his own words “an absolute nightmare”

In 1981, the post of Librarian became vacant but only at the eleventh hour did he apply, He did so out of courtesy to Mrs Ursula Vaughan-Williams who he knew would have expected it, but was not offered the job since he was thought too young!

The sucessful candidate, however, actually resigned after one week, stating that it was impossible for one person to fulfill the library tasks. Malcolm was accordingly offered the post by Nibs Matthews, then Artistic Director, and the rest as they say is history. Yes, Malcolm went on to be an older and, probably, wiser librarian

In that initial “honeymoon period”, as he calls it, he continued with the normal library proceedures but then felt a distinct desire to make things happen and “open the doors” of both the Library and the Society. Thus began the Library Lecture series in 1981; then the conferences; the exhibitions; the books and Cassettes; the broadcasts ….

Yes, he made things happen! Each of these activities alone will take far too long to list in their entirety, but there have now been over one hundred library lectures on all aspects of folk culture: ranging from Morris Dance, Parody in traditional song to Carnivalesque in the West Indies and Song collecting in the Southern Appalachians.

His own talks and presentations have taken him as far afield as the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, Washington D.C and his seminar sessions about the Library, Folk and educational resources, have been held at various folk festivals all over England. I did once notice, however, that he was not really too enthusiastic about Folk Festivals. I thought this was his natural modesty and shyness [hem] then I learned of his other summer time passion – that of cricket!

In 1986 he started the Library series of cassettes with *Early in the month of spring*; followed by a further six tapes which included Fred Hamer’s field recordings and a

cassette of Fred Jordan Many will also recall the musical events such as *An Evening with Cecil Sharp and Ashley Hutchings, An Evening with Walter Pardon* and *Far From My Native Home,* which featured Irish musicians now living in England

In the 1990s he presented and co-wrote eight radio programmes, C*ollecting Folk* which focused on contemporary fieldworkers. More recently, his Radio4 documentary on Cecil Sharp's songs in Somerset called *The Seeds of Love* was widely acclaimed when it was broadcast in the summer of 2003.

An extremely useful and important series of individual bibliographies on *Social dance, Sword, Clog*, *Morris* and *May* were published by the library in the 1980s and, between 1993 and 1995, he edited the Education series on British Traditions - which I had written with Carolyn Robson. We were still speaking after that, too and, in 2002, we jointly edited *"Room, Room, Ladies and Gentlemen": an introduction to the English mummers' play.*

Perhaps the two most singularly important and recent publications are *Still Growing:* and *Dear Companion***.** Both featuring material from Cecil Sharp's collecting, these books are probably those of which he is most proud.

This, of course, is not to ignore the daily running of the library, organising staff and volunteers, dealing with enquiries, organising cataloguing and indexing, making accessible the phenomenal sound and photographic archive etc. etc…. and the recent digitisation of card catalogues and indexes, development of the website and the potential for on-line catalogues continues to make the library even more accessible.

Malcolm is rightly proud of making the manuscripts, the cylinders, and scrapbooks more accessible. He modestly states that, although they were simply stored behind locked doors, they simply needed rediscovering; but someone, of course, needed to reveal them! We can now easily browse through copies of the manuscripts of Sharp, Broadwood, Karpeles et al .... in a library that is probably the friendliest of Libraries anywhere.

Often outspoken, but honest, Malcolm should also be celebrated for his endurance and tenacity and times when he has stubbornly fought opposition to projects which have later proven their worth.

Malcolm actually enjoys being a catalyst - putting people of similar interest together and he gets the greatest of job satisfaction in the knowledge that he has been able provide others with material that they can go away and explore. He is simply enthusiastic about getting other people exited – allowing them discover material for themselves – much as he himself had been able to do. Perhaps to change their lives as Tony Conell had done him to a quarter of a century before.
Acknowledgment to his help appears in hundreds of books and on recordings and

bear witness to his constant support, research and enabling attitude.

Most of this is clearly beyond the call of librarianship and I think it right that we should here keep in mind the fact that he is also a family man. Perhaps we should commiserate with his partner, Laura and their two children, Hannah and Matt and trust that his efforts and enthusiasm has not taken too much of his time and energy away from them. That's, of course, not mentioning his beloved cricket!

It was no wonder that, in 2002, he was awarded the OBE in the New Years honours list for services to Music Librarianship and Heritage… and… so tonight another award and the highest accolade the English Folk Dance and Song Society can give.

Only once before, has this been given to an active member of staff [Nibs Matthews]. So this really is seen as a very special statement and a declaration of the Society's recognition of the work that Malcolm Taylor has done for Traditional Music Dance and Song and we thank the Society for that.

There has always been a special relationship between the Copper family and the Society and that continued in the friendship and admiration between Bob and Malcolm himself. He did once say to me that you kind of knew exactly where you were with the Copper family: it always felt as if you were batting in the same team. Or was it, I politely yet logically suggested, drinking in the same bar?.

Bob Copper was always supportive of the EFDSS and especially the work of the library and, as I mentioned earlier, I am sure that if he were with us today – it would be he standing here now. It was Malcolm who concluded the many tributes at Bob's farewell in Rottingdean last year, so it seems rightly fitting to ask Bob's daughter Jill to make the presentation of the gold badge to Malcolm Taylor.