GOLD BADGE CITATION

MIKE HEANEY

Reputation is a funny thing. Some people crash through doors to get noticed, while others attempt downright skulduggery to achieve an end. Others hold on to the shirt-tails of others to bask in glory, and some simply stumble upon it (as an OBE, I should know). But then there are those that play a steadier game to make their point, using plain honesty, generosity and hard work to unselfconsciously build a reputation. I am delighted to report that today the English Folk Dance and Song Society confers its most prestigious honour on a man who has undeniably achieved this recognition via this latter pathway. He is somebody whom I have known for over twenty five years and without whose professional and kind support during that time I would never have achieved a thing within our precious library. That man is Michael Heaney.

Mike is a Mancunian, born in 1946, and primarily educated in Salford and then at the University of Birmingham, where he completed a first degree in Russian in 1969 and then an MA in the same subject in 1970. His love affair with the Bodleian Library then began and within which he attained professional status in librarianship leading to his becoming an Associate of the Library Association through its Mature Registration Scheme in 1978 and then as a Fellow in 2000 (translated to F.C.I.L.I.P in 2002). Mike has risen through the ranks, being a key figure in the Bod's planning and instillation of automated services, and since 1998 Head of Service Assessment and Planning for the Oxford University Library Services, serving on numerous internal and external committees and steering groups, such as that for the James Madison carpenter Collection Online Catalogue. For most of us that might seem a busy enough existence.

More specifically, though, Mike has been a member of the *Folk Music Journal* editorial board since 1987, during which time he has been assistant editor and editor, also serving on variously named EFDSS sub-committees since 1984 and now the Library Advisory Committee, the other principal focus of his interest. The logical link, of course, is research, and from here I think his most outstanding contribution to the folk community stems.

Mike became interested in morris dancing around 1976 after seeing Oxford City Morris Men at St Giles's Fair in Oxford. So much so, in fact, that he found out where they practiced and went along to join in. There he got a grounding in Cotswold morris and rapper dance. Fortunately for us, in 1978 the bagman asked Mike to up-date the side's history and passed on to him a tattered old album illustrating their existence since 1938. And there a seed was obviously sown. As Mike says, 'I started digging around and things just began to grow.'

You could say that living in Charlbury at the time was convenient, proximate as it is the Wychwoods, prime morris hunting grounds for the early collectors. And then of course there he was at the Bod, where Percy Manning's' Oxfordshire morris manuscripts from the 1890s were as often as not on his desk rather than in the stacks – a good way to meet fellow morris dance researchers! But the inevitable trail led to the papers in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library and into contact with Roy Judge, the London-based archivist of the Oxford University Morris Men and who by then was well on his way to becoming one of the most respected folklore scholars England has ever produced. This was the start of a symbiotic relationship which, together with Keith Chandler's colossal contribution, has proved to be so important to the study of popular culture in England, and particularly the morris dance. The depth and methodology of their work, being able to synthesise differing primary source materials into a logical whole, set a new benchmark and a stream of articles started to flow, first in *The Morris Dancer*, *Morris Matters* and our own

English Dance & Song, and then later in the weightier *Folklore* and *Folk Music Journal*, not to mention the *Annals of Early Morris* co-written by John Forrest and published by CECTAL. It was all ground-breaking stuff, not least because of its originality, changing our views about morris dance, its history, and more importantly its role and function. Maybe the only view not challenged was the role that beer played in its enactment, but that's another matter.

During this very busy period I was lucky to get to know Mike and enlist his tireless support for the library. There were his lectures on the Bedlam Morris and his trip to California to excavate the Stowe manuscripts, and then *An Introductory Bibliography on Morris Dancing*, an update of Russell Wortley's original and which is now in its third edition on the EFDSS website. Most significantly, he has been a very active member of all my library committees since that time and has always responded (often with alarming immediacy) to the multitude of tasks and pleas for advice I have set him over the years.

Mike moved to Eynsham in 1981 and joined the recently re-formed Eynsham Morris, teaching himself concertina and melodeon, which came in handy when he gave up dancing in the mid-eighties due to dodgy knees (the morris man's recurrent equivalent of the footballer's fractured metatarsal). He says of his playing, 'I use a four-stop, one-row melodeon for Eynsham primarily because it generates more noise than anything else does.' I am reliably informed that Mike becomes quite animated while playing the melodeon, which he does in a very rhythmic, energetic and almost aggressive (or should we say assertive) fashion, in-keeping with the Eynsham dancing style. This activity obviously brings out the hidden beast in him. God only knows what his wife, Fran, and their offspring make of it all.

The greatest compliment I can pay Mike is that, in my view, he sits next to Roy Judge in eminence as a researcher and as a man of great

generosity of spirit. I know for a fact that Roy held him in the highest regard. Indeed, all who work with him have nothing but the utmost respect for his word and his wisdom and his organized ability. I sometimes live in trepidation of how he will view some new initiative I have put in place in the library, but I always know that it will be considered, authoritative and ultimately useful and supportive – with not a little dry humour throw in for good cheer. But anyway, who am I to argue with a University Challenge champion.

The research goes on and we await *the* book on the history of the morris. I'm assured that it is still in his sights; at least, as Mike says, 'One day I may get round to it!' Let's hope it's sooner rather than later.

MHT 11/2007

.