PATRICIA ELIZABETH WILKINSON
Citation for award of the Gold Badge of the English Folk Dance and Song Society
Saturday 7th October 2006

It is my privilege to be here tonight to read this citation at an event prepared by Pat for all the members of her classes and workshops, some close friends and family as a celebration of her 70th birthday, in thanks for all their support over the years. She had no idea of this award which has occurred at such an appropriate time.

As a schoolgirl of thirteen Pat's lifelong fascination with folk dancing began, thanks to the inspiration of Miss Annis Broadbent, a dedicated schoolteacher and organiser of the Morecambe Folk Dance Group. At that time many Groups in the area vied for trophies in dance competitions in which the Morecambe Group, well drilled in rhythm, deportment and presentation won high praise from the judges and not a few trophies. Through Annis Broadbent Pat was to meet William Ganiford who visited often as adjudicator of the competitions and teacher in the Days of Dance. She remembers being enthralled by his dancing of a morris jig and was well and truly hooked. He became her lifelong friend and dancing mentor. He and Anne enjoyed the hospitality of Pat and Barrie many times as well as loyal help and support from them during their last days.

At school Pat became a Member of the EFDSS as she still is today After leaving school Pat went to study further at an Adult Education College and to pass the EFDSS examinations at Advanced Level in Country, Morris and Sword dancing while working with her mother in her Bed and Breakfast business. With a rich background in Country, Morris, Long Sword and Rapper, in her 21st birthday year Pat started a career of what, in 2007 will be 50 years of teaching adults for the Local Education Authority.

In 1969 William composed the dance 'Miss Boucher's Request' for the Wharton Ball and in the same year Miss Boucher married Mr Wilkinson, who was persuaded to abandon his Scottish dancing and his kilt (which lingers yet in the wardrobe, I believe)in favour of the English Folk Dance. Barrie continues, as always, to use his professional expertise to help her in all matters electronic, typographical and logistical and Pat would be the first to acknowledge the tremendous support he provides to her teaching and travels.

Her teaching, workshops and calling take her to a wide local area including, Lancaster, Hornby, Preston, Barrow, Morecambe, Galgate and Halton. She has become renowned for her desire to promote a good standard of dance, her organisation, good humour, inclusiveness and love of beautiful tunes. Currently she continues with weekly classes at Morecambe, Halton and Galgate and fortnightly at Arnside, plus workshops in Country, Rapper and Long sword and Running Set. She is both a Member and Secretary of the Lancaster and Morecambe Group Committee.

Pat continues to be involved in many other local activities. In 1987 she and Barrie organised a weekend of Country, Morris, Rapper and Long sword at the Strathmore Hotel in Morecambe. This enjoyable event ran for sixteen years until it ceased to be a viable proposition. In 1991, following the death of Gladys Muschamp, Pat took over the Bolton-le Sands Group where she runs a popular monthly Saturday dance. A Costume Ball in Lancaster, which Pat initiated and called at, was a new venture in 2001 and continues to be an attractive event today.

Pat enjoys working with children and has taken local Junior School classes through Folk Dancing for the National Curriculum and also Brownie-Guides and Guides for their country dance badges. She has called at many fund-raising events for a variety of charities including, the R.N.L.I, Down's Syndrome Association and P.T.A.s.
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Lancashire Folk, formerly Lancashire District, co-ordinates the folk dance activities of the fourteen clubs in the county. Pat has served on this committee for over thirty years and is currently Course Leader. As such she is involved in workshops – organising and advising people, tutoring them in calling skills, teaching techniques and an understanding of music. She is currently preparing to lead a Caller's Workshop in Preston in November. Her own approach as Caller or Course Leader is highly professional. It is rooted in having a thorough knowledge of the timing and movements in the dances she is offering, making sure the musicians have the required music in good time, checking equipment for sound quality and, above all, striking a good relationship with her dancers. All these qualities she strives to pass on to those she advises, and who, hopefully, will become callers themselves at club level or beyond.

Pat is continually involved with the Folk and Arts events in Lancaster and Morecambe. Until the International Folk Festival finished, Pat served on its committee. She was involved in helping to care for foreign groups (using her considerable Guest House skills) cooking, feeding and ferrying performers to various venues and being with them at Mayoral Receptions. The culmination of the week was a Ceilidh that she ran for the English teams and the visiting foreign teams.

Over a number of years Pat has been M.C. for Balls at Preston, Manchester, Barrow, Lancaster and Morecambe. More recently she and Barrie travel much further afield for, with the arrival of costume balls, she has taken the Bath Ball four times, also Lichfield; Norwich; Cavendish Hall, Edensor Derbyshire; Edinburgh and, this year, Cheltenham. She makes regular contributions to the Folk Week at Casterton, Cumbria. Dances and workshops have found her in Bedford, Sheffield, Stockton, Malton, and even, on one occasion, Durres in Albania.

The New Assembly Summer School is a well-known and long-established event on the folk dance calendar. In 1991, following the death of the previous organiser, Pat and Barrie were invited to take over that very demanding role. The New Assembly takes place in August and is usually held in College accommodation at different locations in England and Wales. Each venue has to be visited (sometimes more than once) and thoroughly researched beforehand. During the week Pat and Barrie make every effort to

ensure everyone's comfort and to see that the accommodation and service are satisfactory. They act as host and hostess for the week and, in addition to the dancing, offer two trips to places of interest in the area. The full programme includes Country, Long Sword, Rapper, Running Set and singing. In addition to all the administration (including the considerable finances) and pastoral care Pat finds the time and energy to take two workshops each day and two evening dances during the week. She co-ordinates a team of other callers to assist and, of course, her musicians play an essential part of the week. It is not surprising that the event attracts around ninety enthusiasts (many book from one year straight to the next) Pat and Barrie are noted for their hospitality and the week for its happy atmosphere of good dancing to good music.

Before his retirement in 1977, Tom Cook recommended that Pat should take over his "Music Made Visible" Course at Burton Manor, in the Wirral. He recognised that her calling, presentation and feel for music would meet the highest standards. In addition to continuing this course she has taken training days for beginners at Burton. Pat also tutors a Monday-to-Friday Course at Abbot Hall, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria.

Pat has been a member of "Gusto" from its inception, taken all the courses and received her badge as an Approved Tutor at Cecil Sharp House in1997

In 2002 Pat was invited to a Buckingham Palace garden party in recognition of her promotion of English dancing. The following year she was the proud recipient of the Silver Cross awarded by the publication "This England" for her contribution to the "Promotion of the English Way of Life and the Preservation of English Traditions". Each of these awards moved her deeply as the submissions had been made by individual members of her local groups and were an indication of the esteem in which she is held in this area.

Pat has a warm and sociable manner, with the gift of making everyone feel that they matter to her, regardless of age, ability or infirmity. Her events are always efficiently run whilst she, at all times, appears relaxed and at ease. (She has remarkable hearing and sight and never misses a trick!) She has a love of beautiful tunes alongside a firm belief in the quality of dancing. Above all there is always laughter and fun. Her passion for dancing has, over many years, fired the imagination of hundreds of people who would fill this hall many times over. It would be difficult to find a better ambassador in the cause of English Folk Dancing.

While congratulating her on being awarded the Gold Badge, the highest honour bestowed by the EFDSS, we would thank her for the immense pleasure she has given us all while earning it.