



One of the richest pleasures of my life has been the friendship of the Rusby family. And a real bonus of that friendship has been a fairly close-up take on the emergence, blossoming, development and achievement of one of the greatest talents and distinguished careers not only in folk music but in *any* music. She's been called The Barnsley Nightingale; by rights it should probably be, 'Barnsley *Blackbird*' – but alliteration hasn't got to Barnsley yet! 'Nightingale,' 'Blackbird', Angel of Folk' the soubriquets come and go but steadfastly she remains, simply, gloriously, Kate Rusby, her name almost a byword for integrity, thoroughbred quality and absolute lack of pretention.

In choosing to honour her with their Gold Badge Award, the English Folk Dance and Song Society could have done so for any one of Kate's considerable achievements - her glorious song writing, her spearheading the superb (and now multi award-winning ) Underneath The Stars Festival, her inspirational example to so many folk artists from a younger generation, her ambassadorship for the folk movement - opening up the ears and hearts of so many who'd previously been diagnosed as seriously folk intolerant; and then there's this remarkable collection of carols Kate has curated and championed far beyond their native Yorkshire, taking this rich seam of song and spreading it far and wide to the appreciation and delight of audiences throughout the UK - and even in Lancashire!

The albums, the tours, the collaborations, the work in film, the inspired - daft as a brush/box of frogs video posts - all these elements add up to an extraordinary body of work and it's in recognition of the breadth as well as the depth of her talent that tonight's Gold Badge Award is to be made. In almost any interview she's ever given Kate has glowingly acknowledged an enormous debt of gratitude to her family and the music that flowed from it, filling the house, the car, the hot-tub with words and melody that seeped through her pores and into her soul. This music could, though all too easily have become unavailable to the generation of Rusbys that passed it on to Kate's generation and by way of her to generations that follow. These songs, tunes, ballads and more could so easily have slipped from the collective memory and been lost forever had it not been for the early pioneering effort, dedication and devotion of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. In my day the Society was more simply referred to as EFDSS but younger and wiser minds tell me it's now



known as 'Eff Dis'- which might be all well and good down in that there London; but in the Liverpool I come from, a person could find himself in some serious bother going around declaring, 'Eff Dis!' But whatever it's best known by, I think it splendidly appropriate and poetically fitting that tonight one great folk institution should present its' most prestigious Award to that other great folk institution we love and know as Kate Rusby.

*The citation was written by Willy Russell, English dramatist, lyricist and composer. His best known works are Educating Rita, Shirley Valentine, Blood Brothers and Our Day Out.*

*Kate was presented with her badge 4 December 2019 at Sheffield City Hall.*