

TIMBER WOOD – KENT DRAMA ASSOCIATION

Marion Baldwin recalled Timber's connections with the **Kent Drama Association**.

'He who would valiant be, 'gainst all disaster
There's no discouragement would make him once relent
His first avowed intent to be a Pilgrim.'

Those words sum up for me Timber Wood's steadfast commitment to whatever organisation he supported throughout his life. We are all here this evening, because we valued Timber's friendship. He was a friend to the KDA for half a century and I am proud to be representing that friendship and association this evening.

How does the KDA recall Timber? Above all, a man who was totally trustworthy; when he gave his word, we knew we were in safe hands. He would probably have seen himself as

a practical man, with two feet firmly planted,
a man who spoke his mind
could not suffer fools
and showed a distaste for pretensions of any kind.

BUT, he was, too, an imaginative man -

- an intuitive and inspirational character where drama was concerned
- a combination of qualities that made him a rare breed in the drama world.

What controlled, managerial skills Timber revealed in dire committee meetings, when many who loved the sound of their own voices would waffle on, losing the point! Timber would suffer with his grumpy glower, then he'd thump the table, wake up some and bring others back to reality. Then, when everyone saw it *his way*, he'd smile that crumpled, creased smile that filled his face. He'd won the day!

During County Drama Festivals, one learned of his partisan pride in his Birchington Players. How he radiated delight when Birchington achieved awards and the Finals. He was, of course, an ardent supporter of Kent Drama, but one always felt that the Birchington Guild and all that it represented for him – his extended family, if you like – was the pivot of all his thinking. Energy, enthusiasm, empathy with both back-stage and on stage people and those out front, flowed around Timber. There was no task or situation he was not prepared to tackle head on. It is recalled that some people ducked when they saw him coming!

It is some seventeen years since the KDA honoured Timber with the Life Time Achievement Award for services to drama. In 2001 when KDA faced a breakdown and threatened to be dissolved. Even though he was seriously unwell at the time, Timber came to Maidstone to protest. I sat beside him and held his hand for what was to be, though I didn't know it then, the last time. Always the tenacious fighter – always ready to protect a cause he believed in!

It would take a whole evening to list and comment on every contribution that Timber made to Kent Drama – so I sum up – Timber was a mercurial, magical man. We shall remember him with affection and will always recognise the gifts he brought to the Kent Drama Association. We have lost a stabiling influence. We have lost a dear friend.

Thank you Timber.

Marion Baldwin asked if I would include another aspect of Timber's connections with the Kent Drama Association in this tribute. She said that while he was on the Committee, he promoted the idea that funds should be put aside annually, in order to run courses of training for 'Voice & Speech', 'Movement', 'Players', 'Improvisation', 'Creating Characters' and other elements of excellence in the realm of Drama and Stage Production.

These activities were initially aimed at the younger age groups, but the more experienced people who were involved in amateur dramatics were soon enjoying the benefits of the courses, with Timber's wholehearted encouragement.

These courses did much to improve the standards of amateur drama throughout the county.

[Jennie Burgess]