

TIMBER WOOD - GUILD OF PLAYERS

Ray Marsh recalled his memories of Timber and the **GUILD of PLAYERS**.

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I first met Timber in 1963, 'Guild-wise', although I knew him earlier through football. It is my pleasure to have the opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the Guild, regarding Timber's considerable involvement. I feel that a few words will nowhere near cover Timber's dedication to the Guild – perhaps a few weeks would be more like it.

1963 – HOLIDAY CAPERS – I expect a lot of you remember this.

One of the many things Timber arranged and organised on behalf of the Guild was the Holiday Capers. This was a show that the Guild put on at Cliftonville Hall for 'Margate Hotel and Boarding House Association', to entertain senior citizens during their holidays in May and October. Always, in the front row were John Walsh, Harry Anish and John Brench, all Town Mayors in their time. By the end of the first week, they knew all the routines and songs and could have stood in for the cast.

Further Capers were performed at the Winter Gardens, to a full house, and also 'Canine Capers', on behalf of a Dog's Home at Ramsgate. He even arranged them for the Temperance Society at Broadstairs Pavilion, where all the songs related to **drink** had to be taken out – 'Champagne Charlie', 'Drink to me only' etc. These shows were all organised by Timber, through his many contacts, and the revenue started the Guild off on a sound footing.

PANTOMIMES:

Timber produced many pantomimes at the old Church House in Kent Gardens. Timber first Pantomimes in 1947 were at the old Church House, and then later at the Winter Gardens, to packed houses and following on later still at the new Village Centre. He was always available to anyone else who produced one too.

FESTIVAL PLAYS:

Timber produced many Festival Plays: 'The Kingfisher', where he got Kent Sectional Sheds to erect a greenhouse on the stage; 'The Chalk Garden', 'Born in the Gardens' – and he never finished lower than 3rd in any Festival – quite an achievement. I can also remember being in a play with Timber at Church House, 'Hewers of Coal', in the One Act Festival. You didn't get HIM to perform on stage very much though.

GREENGROCER'S in Canterbury Road:

I expect you all remember Timber's Greengrocer's – or should I say 'Guild Office'? If you ever went in there for anything appertaining to the Guild, he simply moved 4 cwt of potatoes, a bag of onions – and found what you wanted.

TIMBER'S CONTACTS:

Over the years Timber established many valuable contacts for the Guild, for scenery, mainly Bunny Baron, who used to be at the Lido, the Costume Lady at the Palladium, where he frequently visited and purchased many costumes for the Guild. These have been used over the years in our pantomimes – all with the names of the stars of the day stitched into them. Tom Jones – his costume fits me – not so sure about the trousers – Mike and Bernie Winters, Des O'Connor and many more.

Peggy Mann related this next story to me. When they went up to London for fur coats for 'Move Over Mrs Markham', after phone calls, they went to a furriers in Bond Street. There they had a fashion parade of expensive furs – ocelot and mink – and at the end, they came away with two big carrier bags with furs in them worth thousands of pounds. This was at the time of the IRA bombings in London. They weren't allowed to take the bags into taxis or shows that they wanted to see and eventually Timber had to sit with the bags in the guard's van of the train, all the way back to Birchington. When the furs were returned, the only payment the furrier wanted was a bottle of whiskey.

PRESS CONTACTS:

Timber always had a good relationship with the Press, namely Reg Foster of the East Kent Times, whereby we always had full-page reports for all our productions.

THINGS TIMER ORGANISED for the GUILD:

Among these were Cabarets for the Mayors Ball, for Birchington's Chairmen – Neville Hudson, Wally Wanstall and Bill. Old Time Musicals for many requests like The Heart Foundation, The Twinning Association, and many more, were also all part of his activities.

QUEEN MOTHER'S VISIT:

When the Queen Mother visited the Winter Gardens, Timber organised a show for her, which at the time was televised and recently it was shown again on the news at the time of her death.

OLD TIME MUSIC HALLS:

For many years Timber was the chairman of the Guild's productions of Old Time Music Halls. You would have to go a long way to have found a better one. I treasure the book on 'Old Time Chairman Repertoire', which he gave me when I took over the Chair for our Christmas productions – and for his guidance.

MEMORIES:

We must all have our own individual memories of Timber, but one I'll always remember was when Mr Powell-Cotton (of Quex Park) kindly loaned us some items of priceless furniture for one of Timber's plays. John Hutchings and I were carrying a large rolled-up Indian carpet down the stairs, with Timber directing operations. 'Left a bit ... right a bit ...', when we hit the priceless lamp hanging over the stairwell. Timber went into a panic, as he could see the rare object swinging away, and I said to Tim, 'Don't worry, Tim, it's only an old one!'

FINAL COMMENT:

Over the years, Timber has established the Guild as a major amateur society, recognised all over Kent. He has, with his organisation and contacts, saved the Guild thousands of pounds and also put the Guild on the financial footing it has at the moment. He will be sadly missed.

Apart from his final illness, Timber never ever missed a production or performance of the Guild. It will not be the same without him sitting at the back of the hall at productions and rehearsals, ready to give advice, help and assistance to anyone. Even if you wanted an elephant for a production, he'd say, 'Leave it with me, I'll get it.' And he did!

There was always comfort to know he would be in his back seat in the corner, near the bar – and no doubt, for all future productions of the Guild
he'll still be there.