

TIMBER WOOD & QUEXO

[This item should have been submitted by Neville Hudson, who spoke on Timber's connections with Quexpo at the Memorial Service. Unfortunately, he spoke 'off the cuff', so had no printed version to loan to me for this series of tributes. He has still not produced anything (after nearly four months of promises!), so I have had to put this together from various sources of my own. Any errors in the text are entirely my own responsibility.]

At what date Timber Wood became involved in the 'Village Centre' Project I am not sure, but I would think it was very early on. The initial idea for one was first mooted in 1953, during the Queen's Coronation year. By 1969, the Fund-raising Committee, of which Timber was a member, had decided to stage a major event over the Bank Holiday Weekend and had been offered Quex Park as the venue. (This was shortly after there had been a major event in Belgium called 'Expo', which ran for two successive years.)

From the moment the name of '**Quexpo**' was given to it (by a member of a local Drama Group at a meeting in 1969) it became one of Timber's 'babies'. He fronted all the organising of the event, from the booking of the acts to the clearing up of the rubbish after the event. His organising skills were such that, although his internal team was quite small, its members each recruited others to fulfil their parts in the huge 'jigsaw' that produced Quexpo. This vast army eventually generated thousands of pounds towards the building of the Centre, the paying off of the initial loans, the funding of the extensions and enlargements that have been undertaken, and the equipping of the hall, meeting rooms, kitchen, bar and stage.

All this work took many hours of Timber's time, but he had a huge number of contacts in all walks of life, and always seemed to know the right people to approach. Because he worked so hard himself, others were encouraged to do likewise, all on a completely voluntary basis.

When the final Quexpo took place in 1985, there had been 16 years of constant planning and working. Without Timber's skills and determination that the event should be a big success each year, it is highly unlikely that it would have lasted so long. Its contribution to the Village Centre funding was invaluable and the whole project would probably have remained a vague dream forever, instead of a concrete reality which thousands of people, in Thanet and beyond, enjoy each year.

Jennie Burgess [Parish Archivist and Trustee of the Birchington Heritage Trust]

January 2003