

Robert William Thorn

23 June 1945 to 10 July 2010

'Bob' as everyone knew him grew up, one of three children in a small house in Chesham, Bucks, his father having died when Bob was fourteen. He came to East Anglia in the early 1970s when the Post Office, for which he worked at the Research Centre at Dollis Hill in North London, transferred him to the new centre at Martlesham.

Bob came to live in Grundisburgh where he met his neighbour Maggie who was to play a major part in his life. In 1978 he became involved in a production of the pantomime 'Cinderella' at the village primary school. When that production team of friends evolved into GADS, Bob soon became their 'lighting man'. He remained the drama group's most valuable production team member from the late seventies right up until the 2010 pantomime. In the early days Bob used his useful contacts at BT and for several years GADS benefitted from being able to borrow lighting and cables from the Martlesham main lecture theatre. Gradually GADS became self-sufficient and relying on Bob's expert advice has been able to replace the original lighting system with something more sophisticated. Bob was always extremely careful with the lights; on set-up days, he was usually in the village hall long after everyone else had gone home - quietly and without fuss carefully placing the lights - making sure any special effects were working as required and generally being his laid back, efficient self. Break-set day saw Bob - again working more or less on his own - dismantling the lighting, never asking for help but accepting any offer to take the lights to Red House, the home he shared with Maggie.

At Red House the lights were stored having been dusted down, lenses polished, connecting wires wound into neat circles and tied, cables wiped down and coiled - packed carefully into boxes. Bob's long-time friend and erstwhile fellow GADS member Iain Langdon, recalls that only once did Bob's back-stage role expand to on stage when he appeared for thirty-seconds in a non-speaking role (a strict caveat made by Bob!) Iain, also remembers some of Bob's droll comments and his wry sense of humour. 'How's the show going this time Bob?' - 'No worse than usual?'. 'Any problems with the technical rehearsal Bob?' - 'I wouldn't really know, I've not read the script yet!'

Script read or not, Bob's contribution was always 'spot-on' and every producer over the years took comfort from the fact that 'the lighting' at least was in safe hands.

Bob's other contribution to Grundisburgh was through his involvement with the Grundisburgh, Burgh and Culpho Horticultural Society with which he helped for many years in many ways. He zealously proofread the show schedule and acted as recording steward, identifying prize winners from their anonymised entries! Bob was not able to undertake this task this year and there was trouble reading the information from some stewards - never the case with Bob's almost copperplate perfect handwriting.

During Bob's long and last painful illness he and Maggie were lovingly supported by a large group of friends and he was always so grateful and gracious in accepting help. Maggie and Bob's marriage at Easter was greeted with joy by their friends, and Bob's birthday in July was a chance for a large gathering of friends to show their love for this quiet, charming, witty and clever man. Everyone in GADS respected Bob's expertise and for years the question would be posed from time to time 'what will we do when/if Bob is no longer with us?'. We have discovered that it is possible to find a replacement at the lighting desk - but no-one can replace Bob.

Madge Nicholas with thanks to Iain Langdon.

Right: Bob lighting 'Jack and the Beanstalk' in 1985

