

Edward Robert Wood, 1914-1998

It was with much sadness that we heard of the death of Ted Wood, who was a very popular and colourful character. He was born in Watford and, in his youth, was described as a good student and athlete, especially as a swimmer. He was awarded a University scholarship but was not able to make use of it - instead he read widely and educated himself. He became a Customs and Excise Officer before and after World War II, and worked in Glasgow and later London where he spent the last 40 years of his life. During the War he served in India as an RAF signalman, a title that did not please him as he was a Radar expert, which could not be revealed as it was then a new and unknown science.

Ted had many interests and took them

all seriously. He joined the BAA in 1971 and devoted much time to astronomy. Although he made some observations of Jupiter, most of his work was in proof-reading data for the BAA *Handbook*. With his knowledge of mathematics he was able to spot the slightest errors in tables and calculations.



Ted Wood in Montana for the 1979 eclipse. Photo: Shelley Fey

However, it was as an Eclipse-chaser that Ted was best known. He was a member of the 'Monte Umbe' group and with his practical good sense helped to solve a difficulty in fitting binoculars and a small Minox camera together for the best effect. Although he had a great sense of humour and made light of any problems and misfortunes he was, in fact, a very serious person who solved his own and many others' problems in a most ingenious and efficient way.

Another of Ted Wood's talents was music. He played double-bass with the Portobello Orchestra and Southgate College Orchestra, but it was his skill with the recorder that will be remembered by his astronomical friends and colleagues. He always carried his recorder and was able to break down many barriers with it. During an eclipse expedition to what was then Soviet Central Asia, the party were taken on a tour of the town of Tselinograd. They rode on a railway staffed entirely by children, the sons and daughters of the railway workers. After the ride the children gathered round and Ted produced his recorder and played a tune. Immediately the group of children lined up and sang a song. Two years later, in Bali on the way to Australia, Ted found a solitary musician playing a xylophone. Ted taught him to play 'Auld Lang Syne' and they played an impromptu duet. In Kenya for another eclipse, many 'Brits' were seen trying to check their watches at some obscure time... they had been fooled into an automatic time check when they heard the familiar Greenwich beeps, when what they were actually hearing was Ted imitating the time signal on his recorder.

Ted was a member of the Geoids Dramatic Society and acted and sang (tenor) in their productions, the last time performing from a wheelchair; sadly he suffered two failed hip operations. He kept friends entertained with his stories and related his trip to Vega - an island off the coast of Norway. He spoke and translated Norwegian and was also an authority on Elizabethan English. He learnt Braille so that he could communicate with blind friends. In addition to his eclipse journeys he visited his cousins in Australia many times and other friends in Norway and Europe. His last trip in 1997 was an enjoyable cruise to Iceland.

Ted Wood was a most popular figure with both adults and children, with an impish sense of humour, but never malicious. We will miss him.

Russie Atwell