

Antony Woodall (1931-2018)

by Liveryman James Woodall

When my father died just under a year ago, the Company lost a devoted servant of five decades. His family lost a much-loved husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle and cousin, whose life was finely lived, and which was then celebrated so gratifyingly at a thanksgiving service on 22 June 2018 at St Michael's, Cornhill. There, Lady Victoria Leatham generously enumerated his qualities as a Draper.

His development and chairing of what is now the Heritage Advisory Group – where Lady Victoria began her tribute – remains perhaps Dad's most notable achievement. Today, it thrives. Those who knew him knew about his love of art, something of a theme in this short appreciation: he took it to the heart of the Company – rediscovering and restoring paintings, wresting back from the Victoria and Albert Museum the staircase grille, tracking down in another Company the Court Dining Room tapestries...

He loved silver, reflected in the three rosewater dishes he commissioned in 1994, and especially the enormous Golden Jubilee candelabrum whose shadow he relished basking in at dinners. He was intensely proud of these artefacts, as of course he was of his Mastership in 1991, which seemed to set him on a new path, almost a second career, of dedication and artistic immersion as he planned retirement. Not having been either to university or in the army, he was richly provided with copious like-minded Draper friends in early old age.

As is clear, he had occupations well beyond his chosen career. He went to Eton in the 1940s, joined a family insurance firm in the 1950s and spent time as a tea-broker in India in the middle of that decade. The experience marked him deeply. From the late 1950s, he was a successful City stockbroker, until the early 1980s, when he moved to the West End to work in asset management. By then he was looking at things the other side of clients' needs. In the mid-1990s, numerous personal, home-grown interests, which had been uppermost for years anyway, really took wing.

These included furniture, ceramics, games – cards, cricket, golf and croquet (especially croquet, whose rules he wickedly loved breaking *particularly* with players less skilful than him: for instance me) – sailing, amateur dramatics, Gilbert and Sullivan, and singing. He drew and painted, without training and often with an alternative take on perspective. He took up and honed skills at tapestry while he "rested" in front of the TV (he rarely rested,



exactly, though a lot of TV sent him to sleep). His enthusiasm for self-made art became more vivid the older he grew.

This he shared with my mother Deirdre, also a part-time painter. They went on painting holidays together. Another shared passion was gardening. Wonderful floral spaces were created around the three Hertfordshire houses they lived in from 1961: in Westmill, Wyddial and Great Hormead, where my mother still resides.

Almost every "ditty" he penned (and *penned* they mostly were, many to be boomed out at Hall dinners and family parties) defied the norms of scansion and rhyme, but his intention was to be funny and affectionate, which is what he was in life. Everyone, when he stood up in the Hall or in the garden at home (or clearing his throat at the dining-room table), knew to be tickled by what was coming next.

His greatest skill – a major one – was picture-framing. It was his hands-on way of engaging with pictures, rather than strictly speaking painting or drawing them. His elegant frames surround the prints he gave the Hall in 2008. In Hertfordshire, for over a quarter of a century, he built up a loyal body of customers who, as the years passed, took away with them increasingly refined work, the mounts (for example) always beautifully made and drawn. He did this to the end.

He served on many Company committees, and his participation in multiple and more detailed aspects of Drapers' life is, I think, quite well-known and maybe beyond my remit here. I have hoped simply to evoke the broader individual who was my father and who is very sorely missed.