

BETWEEN GLAISTER AND FAITHFULL;

Honor's centrality in sustaining Braziers, 1957-1968

(based on the Glaister Lecture delivered in Braziers, 19 May 2002, given by Alan Clark)

I greatly appreciated the Braziers group-mind's invitation, and found myself positively happy to be back there, and in good May weather. I hope that this lecture-record will go toward closing what may still be something of a gap in the received history of Braziers. Gap or not, my filling-out here is attempted with love, so it will I believe be received with kindness.

The form this presentation takes owes much both to John Woodcock and to Honor herself. To John because — when I read it again after the lapse of some five years— his feeling and beautifully accurate funeral tribute to Honor (*Research Communications*, 16, 1996, p. 13) gave us our theme by saying 'It is not perhaps going too far to suggest that for nearly a decade, encompassing the death of Norman Glaister, Honor's wide-ranging gifts were central to Braziers' survival.'

And my gratitude to Honor, here, is both general, for the most memorable writing in what follows, and specific, for a hint which I picked up from the beginning of her tape-recorded recollection -- which we will shortly be hearing -- of Norman in the 1950s, 'There And Back' (*Braziers: a Review*[40th anniversary], 1990, pp.12 - 13). So, acting upon that hint, this shall largely be 'a composite word-collection of small actual facets' — albeit more of the words are Honor's own than she herself would have envisaged. They come, centrally, from Honor's correspondence with Glynn between 1956 and 1963 — a substantial part of which survives. And there are Honor's letters to me, and mine to her, between 1958 and 1963 - extending, that is, from the beginning of a friendship tentatively blossoming into romance until my return to live at Braziers in December 1963. Most of this material is in my own possession (in original or in copy): that may sound like a narrow base, but it is such a rich one - it could easily sustain a whole weekend's course — that I have felt no pressing need to go beyond it.

I hope that my selections will substantially confirm John Woodcock's suggestion. If so, one consequence should be that any future overall account of Braziers' history — even the briefest of two-minute thumbnail sketches - will, if it is to be accurate, include Honor's name in full equality alongside Glynn's during more than a decade (1957-1968). Both were in line of intellectual-sympathetic companionship with, and succession to, Norman Glaister. Norman, however, seems once to have named Honor rather than Glynn as his likely spiritual successor - it may be of interest not only to feminists that that succession never officially came to pass. And both Honor and Glynn were central in the line of unstinting hard workers of Braziers' first twenty years — work inseparably both practical and sensory. It is striking to note the number and variety of tasks mentioned in the correspondence-record of their sustainedly affectionate, and for much of the time indeed loving, comradeship in the cause of Norman's ideas.

Before turning to that record, we should notice how well Honor's experience had fitted her for the rigours of Braziers during those still-early years. Growing up during the 1920s, in a 'smug' suburban terrace poised between Nottingham slums to the south and a beloved family farm close by to the east, Honor — a thoughtfully idiosyncratic and original-minded Anglican, lifelong — almost decided to become a missionary. Instead, she turned to nursing and proved one of the most dedicated students of her year. When her name belatedly (and at John Woodcock's insistence) appeared on Braziers' letterhead, it was as Honor Fawsitt, SRN. She had qualified at Nottingham General Hospital, pre-war, and post-war returned to nursing at Watlington Cottage Hospital, somehow saving enough to buy, in 1954 or so, the only new car of her life — the cheapest on the market, a Ford Popular at about £325. (Her ownership of

this apparently led Glynn and Norman to suppose for a while that she was wealthy but eccentric; actually she was — monetarily speaking — poor for most of her life.)

Honor's extended spells of hospital work inevitably meant that she was much better acquainted with illness, death and dying than are most of us. Their shared medical background provided one of the several bonds between her and 'JNG', as she habitually referred to Norman Glaister. Between those professional spells, however, she had married an aspirant mead-maker who during the War became a conscientious objector (a widely despised and avoided group at that time), living, somewhat isolatedly, in crumbling millhouses deep in the Buckinghamshire countryside. There she grew vegetables and kept geese as part of her efforts to feed husband Francis and baby daughter Ruth (later Catharine), born 1939. Their second daughter, Candida (1944-2002), arrived before the end of the war. Honor later maintained that her own stomach had shrunk permanently during those austere war and postwar years, since feeding the family was her natural first priority, and means were always insufficient..

In 'A little self-disclosure', written circa 1975 (her 62nd year), Honor recalled:-

I was unique in my coming to Braziers in the Spring of 1958 [inasmuch as] I came with appendages: my mother (79), younger daughter (rising 14), a pony, a dog and a load of domestic chattels. My elder daughter (18) had preceded me by some months and was making her mark in kitchen, meetings, house. (They complained that her menus were extravagant and I kept sending her recipes for cheap, well-balanced meals.) " You 'll have to go and live at Braziers ", my hyper-creative impecunious husband had said... It seemed that there would be a cottage available. A family was about to move out to go round the world in a caravan. And so I came, family, animals and all, to Wichelo. What I did not realize at the time was that my husband was bankrupt — but he never admitted this to me then or later.

So, on to all those pressing Braziers tasks. In a letter to Glynn on January 15, 1959, for instance, Honor writes:

...Sorry about the misfired letters in the type — my hands are cold having just been up to break the ice on the cow trough... When you write or ring will you please tell me again the day the people will be collecting EGGS... sorry to have forgotten it and can't find the paper I noted it on.

And three days later, January 18, at the end of a two-page typed report on a complex sensory-resistive day with Norman at its centre (letter begun 'In the Alcove, 9.30'):-

...Between lunch and the 2.30 session I managed to stencil and run off the Drama and L(iving) R[esearch] programme. Radically adapted by me from N's draft, and involving my taking a partnership in the thing. As Phyllis [Wilkins] said when she saw it, "You 're not spared anything are you dear? " The reactions of the group to [Herbert] Brewer and his [population control] theory were interesting and definite — those of an intelligent resistive protection for evolutionary process and progress. Living language played a large part in communicating this...physical attitudes... moues.. .humour... at one point N[orman] said 'mixed up in the test' instead of 'text'. The group caused N. to modify his original unqualified certainty, I think. We have yet to meet Brewer, of course.

Everyone has gone to bed except Jack [Buckley] for lights, and I must go too. I really am very tired with a head that feels twice the size from over cerebration and an excess of clerical trivia.

Don't forget you belong together with us. And that I still feel you to be some special concern of mine if you'll permit it. Love, H.

Another on this theme - of what Braziers may already have been calling 'specializing in non-specialization' — gives a quite detailed snapshot from about seven weeks later. It is transcribed from Honor's draft, and the square-bracketed passages may have been omitted from, or altered in, the version she sent to Glynn in Liverpool:-

Dearest Glynn

Tues am 3/3/59 in Goring

The course was not too bad after all and gave N. an opportunity to show himself— & us — how up to form he really is — and today he has gone off to the 1st consultation with this new & difficult patient with higher morale than he would have previously.

Hamish returned from his day off with a relieved air having resolved his conflict about going/staying, by simply stating that he is leaving next Monday. We are neither surprised nor chagrined & hope you won't be. Though the removal of our man power is a serious [loss in] view of Bernard [Bertschinger's] aggression]. But it is lucky that I have had 20 years of coping with the sort of practical things usually reserved for men. In the interim before we get another m[aintenance] man - only next time I hope it will be an m.-MAN — I think this little lot will manage well. As if to prove it, yesterday the belt came off when Jack went to start the engine & we got it on again to our surprise.

I have taken the responsibility of the chickens from Hamish as I found them v. neglected & have suspected this before — odd how a schismatic crisis — an unwell man-human individual — often involves a lack of responsibility for domestic animals. [The egg production ought to go up and maintain, and Dorothy is going to share them with me. The cows are OK. Janey & Delia will be glad to get their freedom again but are quite happy — that water device is a great help.]

Jeannie [Westlake] & Jack have one student apiece so far — & I have one for the writers - Hilde Carol!!

It will be good when we get the extra house help at Easter — Joy [Daneman?] & I are finding the girls difficult to keep happy — I think Hamish's going is affecting them too — but [by further exertion on my part — which I realise I had let up on since doing all the office stuff] I think we shall make out — [drawing the line (J & me) as identifying ourselves with them, just short of impracticalness.]

Bonnie [is in volcanic form again — and] has started MOWING.

Must now have a set to with the infernal duplicator - which is giving trouble over the Easter programme.

This is all business — but meant to reassure me as well as you — and comes with my love.
H.

The main Glynn-and-Honor correspondence, and the growth and peaking of their comradeship, extended over more than seven years: from soon after Honor's first visit to Braziers ~ she was made an Active Associate in May 1956, some two years before her actual arrival to work here — through into the early months of Glynn and Margaret's marriage in Spring 1963. Later in that year, Glynn was at last able to secure a post in the South — at the then Bedford College, in Regent's Park. The move enabled him and Margaret to come to live at Braziers, and thus brought to a natural close the reasons for his and Honor's correspondence.

In retrospect, Glynn and Margaret's arrival emerges as a crucial moment of change of direction for the community. Until then — and although throughout his years at Liverpool Glynn had been a remarkably dedicated train-traveller to and fro during term-times, as well as spending much of each long vacation here — he could physically be at Braziers for less than half of every year. I had personal experience of this situation during my first working-months at Braziers, in the autumn and winter of 1956; this was after Honor's first visits but more than a year before her arrival in the community. Particularly during those winter months, Glynn's visits to the small struggling resident group — including, besides Norman himself, Dorothy Glaister and Bonnie Russell — felt as rare as they were looked-forward-to and welcomed. Winters were colder then — and they assuredly felt particularly cold in a financially-struggling Braziers: mains electricity was still years away, boiler-use was a luxury, and paraffin, like food-stuffs, had to be strictly economized. Such conditions, if anything even more constraining two or three years later, are sharply evoked by the other Honor tape-recording played, 'Hard Times' (*Braziers: a Review*, 1990, pp.23 - 26) — Glynn would have been in Liverpool in November, 'when the bailiffs came'. [See 'Hard Times' above.]

The sustainedness of Honor and Glynn's closely affectionate comradeship is doubly striking when one discerns that Glynn's 'blind spots' — of which a former, and fond, Liverpool colleague of his made sure to apprise me on the very day of my arrival in Braziers, in October 1956 — clearly caused Honor (who may not have been offered any such kindly warning, even by Norman himself) some grievous bruising quite early on after her taking up residence. This pain shows in various letters of early 1959, including the February exchange given below. But she could be a good forgiver, and was always a quick learner, so she 'survived with style' as she might later have put it.

In fairness, however, I must record that one of the pleasures of working on this lecture has been the re-encounter with several facets of Glynn at his best, and sometimes also at his most self-critical. Perhaps his chastened contribution to the following exchange may count as both:-

Glynn to Honor, February 26, 1959

I often have a feeling, when encountering your tender and self-expending contact, that I am a dulling distance away from understanding the richer qualities of human love. Don't apologise for your sub-liminal turmoil, in which we all share both as contributors and recipients. It makes such a valued difference to me to have you sending me off on my journeys, whatever the momentary mood of either of us.

My lunch party with Hazel [Powell] and her two wee ones was worth while and will, I hope, prove to have started preparing the ground for a successful [August] camp which will this time include Marian [Faithfull].

I wish I hadn't been so rattled on those two occasions of your initiative. Isn't there still a happier synthesis yet to be found?

Honor to Glynn (response to above), February 28, 1959 — 'import', by the way, was a word of Braziers' special vocabulary of that time:-

The first paragraph of your letter I found comforting; but the last one a little disturbing... had I been interpreting your import then as now instead of your word, the disturbance might never have arisen. As to "a happier synthesis" -- heavenly notion — the potential seems obscured by our mutual disinclination to communicate adequately personally — natural enough, though out of keeping with the aspiration to make things conscious, and curiously detrimental to group needs. If the need for relationship-survival transcends one's individual need, then I think there is great hope for the future. Only the workings out of the difficult details are still painful to our immaturity.

I must think a bit about "Ideal opposites — oneness " and do some duplicating before tea.

Nearly half a year later, however, Honor is again addressing Glynn as 'Very Dearest'. This vivid glimpse is from high summer — 11 August 1959 ("R9,8.50am") (H. is reporting to G. while he's away in Somerset at a summer camp) — and conveys how the houseteam continues to be called on, as ever, to deal with quite earthy emergencies and routines, alongside its 'plain living and high thinking'. By the way, as many of you will already know, 'greater things' was one of JNG's touchstone-phrases — we could re-employ it to good effect at the present day, as pointer to that which our culture almost systematically ignores.

A quick immediate response to yours completed in Minehead, because I feel you need some home-like communication while you are coping with what are perhaps no more than the usual occurrences in a camp or anywhere else/or that matter but that you - and. I hope we for our part — tend to cope [with] more and more at levels of deeper importance. Unwellness of individuals unaware of this and of the complexities of the nature of living together either in the old more primitive way or with the added exquisiteness of effort towards greater things do, sadly enough, tend to seem part of the mechanism of leavening in which the more conscious are the agents, themselves becoming correspondingly aware of themselves in this role and having to make a moral adjustment to meet the growing requirements. When I began this sentence I meant it to include that this quick reply was also because of a need of mine/ours, but it went on without me.

Here (and the patches of unwellness are obvious in the guitar group), the tendency is toward what Bonnie calls 'jagging', though except for herself only in a very minor way.. But late last night, just as Bonnie was going off with her little torch up the drive [to High Cottage] I called her back, having gone down to vet the boiler and found my self landed in ankle deep sewage. This emergency, which caused we three old hens —for D. came out with her Tilley lamp (wise is the virgin who provides herself with a Tilley) — to be poking about for some time with rods etc., made a temporary, though one realises it is basic too, unjagging complete workability between us. We immobilised the blue landing lav.s and decided to get Selwood in the morning [WJ. Selwood, plumber, of 'Verona', Woodnote] (though he hasn't been yet but is coming), and then B. and I lugged up the dustbins and unloaded them at the top gate. It seemed somehow suitable that our nocturnal activities were connected with sewage and rubbish for if we could only throw our basic clutter overboard we could get off to a clean start one feels.

It was lovely along the Goring road early this morning, a dark kind of mist almost shrouding the hills and the whole landscape still sleeping after the storm. I gathered some Darling Bunnynose on the way back and got the milk [presumably from Miss Dean's dairy at Cleeve] there in time for breakfast to the relief of the houseteam responsible not only for breakfast but also for extravagance with milk yesterday (including midnight tea drinking in which Digger [Martin Glaister, Norman's grandson] now figures largely).

Olive [Higgs, later Udell] has just looked in to ask me to get Omo when I go out. The problem of the SHOPPING which has been such a feature of the bit of process between B. and me seems to be coming to a climax. We are running out of more and oftener and I silently filling the gaps.

Darling I do hope it helps you a bit as it does me a lot to know that the vital contact between you there and us here is in useful order and that even if only one of us (this sounds arrogant I know) at either end of the line is being as aware as possible, it somehow suffices.

I went down to the 7.30 bus last night by the way to meet Ann Hales who from her and her ma's telephone calls seems quite unwell. She wasn't on the bus and hasn't even now arrived, but Joy got off the Didcot bus full of a glowing resilience after her six days in Norwich with friend who has a new baby, and then Claus [Hartwig] and Jutta (here for two days) from their Bath conference, and Duccio who looked well I thought but somehow rarified by his

experiences in Somerset. Later he was adopted by Gran [Mrs Anna Garfield-Howe] who heard him singing and was full of grannish praises. She is a clever old girl — any competition she immediately submerges in her own group. Lilian has got 'guitar-fingers' with learning to play one.

Shall run off to the P.O. so that you will get this. Don't worry re drains. We shall cope. ALL LOVE

Some six weeks earlier, Honor-Bonnie-Dorothy relations — along with my outsider's view of Norman and the group in the dining-room — had happened to figure in an exchange between Honor and myself. It includes, I'm afraid, my immature then view of dedication as a non-renewable quantity. I wrote on 4 July 1959 (extracts): -

About Norman. Although a tableful of Italians for the next little while may remove the necessity, why don't you, when only a handful sit down midweek, sit & serve from one side at his end of the table? I know he 'd rather be isolated than lose his head chair, but he presumably doesn't want to be isolated (?), and it's only habit [sc. the group's] which makes him so. All this, of course, is to save me from slight uncomfortableness when I'm there at quiet times.

As to your wishing that Bonnie and Dorothy could share your happy dedication... I think they have given most of the dedication in them, a limited and expendable quantity in all of us, to Braziers years back — the place you 're dedicated to now wouldn't have survived but for their (and many others', past more than present) love and money then. Possibly in extremis B. & D. could produce a little more dedication, but it's too valuable to be used while yours suffices. I'm not trying to be cynical — some dedication is self-refreshing, as yours may well be, and some declines into enthusiasm (I'd say this was Glynn 's case, but you won't agree). In my time there was no noticeable dedication, but Dora [Penn] provided undeclined enthusiasm. I left partly because a potential dedicatior... wasn't given a chance, but you have surpassed what Philippa [Lawrence] could have done, and Bernard [Bertschinger] bridged the gap to some extent.

Honor replied on 10 July 1959 (extracts):-

2am... I am not here through the usual late toil at the day's extremity, but in a strangely leisured state of sleeplessness having had a couple of days off with some summer malaise — better now, but making this appreciable novelty ... I receive gratefully... your observations on things here. The suggestion about N. at table must be adopted — and I see I must have been ungratefully critical about D. & B. — an unaware attitude I have already mended by your sensitive comment. What you say about 'dedication' is difficult though — that is, the guises it goes under are so individual as to make me think that the same word won't adequately describe what is really common to the personal situations involved. I would like to find an open-ended word that implied the kind of mutual fulfilment (as between the individual and the whole) that is the pivot and test and binding hazard of the thing....

That 'test and binding hazard' continued — with the degree of pace, variety, and pressure to which all these documents attest — until (and through and long beyond) the time of Norman's final illness some eighteen months later.

One theme largely missing from this correspondence is the satisfaction that Norman derived, during the last two years of his life, from the appearance in 1959 of the first English translation of Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man* (now *The Human Phenomenon*). The book

had an introduction by Julian Huxley, whose evolutionary speculations had for decades helped nourish Norman's thought. A series of Braziers Teilhard courses was promptly begun, led by Norman, John, Glynn, Honor among others, proving both popular and long-enduring. Thus that late glow of vindication not only helped sustain Norman himself but provided a main focus for the group as well, for years following.

Drawing toward our close today, here is a glimpse of Norman's last days. Early in the morning of Tuesday 7 February 1961, Honor wrote to me (Glynn having probably perforce returned to Liverpool on the Monday)

After midnight, in the Study, 1st shift vigil — [Tuesday] 7-2-61

...at the end of the meeting [on Sunday evening?] G. said he thought it a commendable thing that individuals in the group were able to report bits of difficult feedback without comment (and without making use of them); that he had noted this before as a valuable thing, as it kept a sort of watchful conversancy while allowing situations to become more creative —

While I am writing this I keep getting up from this little lamplit table near the fire to look at N. who is so patiently sleeping — dying. His general deterioration has today (Mon) reached a sort of penultimate state. He remains quietly conscious, the most relaxed dier I have ever seen, except perhaps my own father who was such a different man — a violent wild artist growing helpless in his human condition yet having a sort of tender-steel which ultimately balanced him into accepting death as he had never accepted life — both, the (final) victims of cancer. Cancer has always interested me, in seeing the kind of people in whom it develops to this degree — as to be fatal in a short term. I have an increasing notion that a major part of cancer research should be conducted along the psycho- rather than physio-biological line — but haven't enough data or properly scientific information to add my weight to the campaign.

[...toward 4am?] Ruth (Anderson) will soon be coming to relieve me ... I am going to bed in R 10 when I go from here...

It is there that my documented story must presently end, although Honor continued to work just as hard in Braziers for fully five years more. That pressure, self-sustained but on the group's behalf, was surely partly at least to blame when, at Easter 1968, she suffered a severe onset of meningeal sarcoidosis. She might have lost her sight, even her life: as it was, she spent weeks in hospital, had to convalesce for about a year, and never quite forgave herself for thus not having been able to nurse her mother through her final illness.

Though physically centred thereafter in Wichelo, Honor sustained her sensory focus, working as she could and attending all major meetings, for another two decades of difficult though sometimes rewarding Braziers experience. After that, for the last seven or so years of her life, while her spirit and presence remained strong for Wichelo-wending houseteam old and new, infirmity ensured that she would increasingly rarely be found in person in this beloved house of such mixed but intense memories.
