

# *Research Communications 25*

BRAZIERS SUNRISE · CHRIS FLYNN-JONES



Braziers Park School of Integrative Social Research

May 2009

# Research Communications 25

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Braziers Park School of Integrative Social Research, Ipsden, Wallingford, Oxon. OX106AN

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## EDITORIAL

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*RESEARCH Communications* has a new editorial team—Woody Wood, Colum Hayward and me, Sandra Cooper. Of course, we are influenced by and indebted to our erudite predecessors, namely Hilda Salter and John Murrell, but have inevitably developed our own style and format. With new blood in the publication's veins, we are presenting a different slant by including short comments from as many residents and friends of Braziers as possible who have willingly (with some needing the occasional nudge) added their opinions and ideas.

Comments on '**Integration**' have proved to be wide-ranging, encompassing the human side, but also the buildings, various tasks and the land. With worldwide pressure on in some way lessening the effects of global warming, Braziers has expanded longstanding practices of organic gardening and self-sufficiency. There is an unofficial car-share arrangement and recycling wherever possible—including some very professional-looking creations from the Easter Weekend craft workshops using what looked like fifty-year-old cast-offs from Braziers' cellar. More importantly, with the price of oil soaring it has become essential to change Braziers' heating arrangements and an enormous amount of work has been done on the exciting project of installing a **Woodchip Boiler** which is described in this issue.

A typical example of one of Braziers' successes is the **Braziers International Artists' Workshop**, which has comment here from Ellie Harrison. For me, this exhilarating event gives a sound backbone to Braziers' creative side, when many artists arrive with their astounding ideas and talents, and busloads of viewers turn up with great enthusiasm.

As I write, preparation is going on at Braziers for May Day Celebrations, which I am sure will be a day studded with surprise and fun. It

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Editorial Board: *Sandra Cooper, Colum Hayward and Woody Wood*

is sure to be a great success and will, again, embrace qualities of inclusion, skill and teamwork.

The last year or so at Braziers has been ‘different’ in that there has been no employed leader for much of the time, leaving the community to jostle along as best it can. Despite some fear, people have leapt into the unknown. In usual Braziers style, the community has come up trumps and led itself into a pretty successful year all round—keeping guests happy, being very productive with crops, creativity and courses alike—and they have even felt able to write about it under the title **Being Leaderless**.

To look forward to Braziers’ future and wishing to give full appraisal of Roger Kelly’s Glaister Lecture entitled **Sustainability, Survival and Integrative Social Research** presented in May 2008, and Veronica Wallace’s lecture on **Social Change** presented at the Members’ weekend in January 2009, we have decided to devote the next *Research Communications* (no. 26) to them. However, to whet your appetite, there are outline descriptions in this issue.

Lastly, Colum and Woody have completed the issue, Woody with a piece called **Exploring Integration**. Colum took the final slot and in **The Back Page** has taken a playful backward glance at the magazine just completed—with hope for the next!

I hope you enjoy reading and absorbing the following pages.

*Sandra Cooper*

*April 2009*

## BEING LEADERLESS

*A look at the effect on the group*

LEADERLESS groups can achieve success, but the most ‘successful’ are shown to be those groups involved in guerrilla activities and protest groups, as in these no centralised control is vulnerable to attack. It is noted that, generally, leaderless groups are not held back by hierarchical commands or bureaucracy and group members rely on their belief system or aim to come together, making decisions from a wide perspective.

At the time of writing, Braziers does not have an official leader. I have seized the opportunity to ask Community members how this is affecting them and their work and how they see this situation affecting Braziers. Many have made pertinent comments, which I reproduce below. Also, I requested that a short questionnaire be completed, the results of which are set out at the end of this article.

SC

### 1. Notes from the Chair

#### BRAZIERS BEING LEADERLESS

##### *History of Leaders at Braziers*

History tells us that, equal though decision-making may have appeared to be, nevertheless the leader from 1950 till his death in 1961 was our founder, Norman Glaister. After a two-year interregnum (when Honor Fawsitt’s wits were pitched against Glynn Faithfull’s) Glynn took over the reigns of leadership, shortly to be in partnership with his second wife, Margaret. They together provided quite the longest and most stabilising ‘management’ in Braziers’ history. In 1998 both Glynn and Margaret died, but Glynn had handed over education to David Allen some four years earlier; and David ‘ran’ Braziers with George Giangrande and his then wife Sarah Wood for a short while.

But by about 1997 none of these people was still in residence. Although one or two individuals pressed their suit for the position of overseer, none was universally accepted; so the house 'ran on empty' till the appointment of our first director ever, Cliff Jordan, who set out to serve a precise three years, from January 1, 2005, to December 31, 2007. Cliff and the Committee of Management replaced his work with two appointments: Gabriella Machokas as Community Co-ordinator and Roger Kelly as Director of Studies from January 1, 2008. However, these arrangements proved to be very short-lived and by the end of July 2008 both had left Braziers.

#### *What do we mean by leaderless?*

'Leaderless' for the Braziers situation is an inexact term, for two reasons.

The first is that, regardless of the residents and house team, there has always been a Committee of Management, with a majority (normally) drawn from non-resident members of Braziers. Apart from its executive management function, the CoM is actually the glue that holds the decades together, as officers drawn from outside the house community will not be swayed by personal house needs and will take the long view.

Secondly, the resident or house team is already well organised into four sub-management groups:

- Office Administration, Sales/Promotion/Design, Accounts
- Hosting and Housekeeping
- Kitchen, Cooking, Dining Room, Vegetable/Fruit/Meat/Eggs production
- Estate Management: Maintenance/Building; Pasture/Lawns/Trees/Fencing/Campfield.

In each of these groups there are residents granted the authority to run a prescribed budget and make all everyday decisions within their area. They have their own Subex committee (it was once called CACKS) which meets weekly. Matters of concern across these four groupings are discussed and resolved. Minutes of this committee are sent to the CoM, so line management is ensured.

So the only thing missing is the community co-ordinator role. Nonetheless Braziers is, as I write in March 2009, very well and responsibly co-ordinated by the people holding these roles.

#### *July 2008 forward*

However, with the two early-2008 appointees gone, Braziers in late July that year felt to be a rather unstable place, as it sought to find its feet as a self-managed group. I listened very hard to all the residents around this time. Thenceforward for three months or so I felt that I and residents in Braziers were walking on eggshells and dusty tinderboxes owing to our having no appointed leader.

The CoM came in for ferocious criticism. Yet, as I listened, I detected a lack of cohesive thought towards a solution re new co-ordinators, and I counselled the CoM to bide its time. Unfortunately this produced more abuse; but never mind, we seem to be through all that now.

Curiously, out of this time of introspection has recently emerged a stronger team, reliant upon each other, and each taking considerable personal responsibility. I don't know if this is sustainable. But—as you will have noted from the section on history above—it has happened before. I'm going to make a guess that the residents have not at any previous time been so well organised and such a strong team to cope with this leaderless situation.

#### *Financial aspects*

In August 2008, the CoM was beginning to get inklings of possible business turndowns; and potential losses looming ahead. So, from the financial point of view, we were reluctant to appoint another community co-ordinator. (As a consequence, sadly, we lost one member of the community).

#### *Director or Convener of Studies*

However, we really want to engage a new Director of Studies (I'd much prefer a title such as Convenor or Co-ordinator of Studies). Regardless of our eventual status as a charity or otherwise, some of us—certainly

myself—feel really sure that Braziers needs to provide substantial Public Benefit. At present we do so-so out of being a venue open to outside groups, but this does not advance intrinsic Brazierian thought and purpose. Using our unique position and history we really can offer Braziers courses once more on a regular basis. All we need is the right person—and I suspect this may be a curious blend between an event organiser, a respected academic, and a person with an alternative mind, aware of the plight of our planet.... What a spec!

Nevertheless the CoM has advertised this post and—as I write—has a half-dozen or so replies, and is arranging an interview selection panel and periods for these candidates to stay at and experience Braziers for a few days. I do ask for the moon and more, but I hope this person might also have some kind of Advice-of-Last-Resort function with the Residents, leaving the various teams autonomous except in cases of insoluble clashes.

I'm pleased the opportunity has been taken to view how people in Braziers see the situation of being leaderless. I hope that at least some of the contributors are optimistic and find it creative.

*C Bryan Harrison  
March 2009*

## 2. Comments from Community Members

- There were strong disagreements of some individuals with the leader we have had during the last three years, but now there are even stronger disagreements between various individuals. Neither position is ideal. It is a very difficult job for a leader and unfortunately it is in human nature to fall out with colleagues anywhere. Even monks and nuns have to face similar situations and sometimes need outside help. I don't really know the answer to this, but it seems to me things are better with a leader, provided s/he is reasonable and tolerant—we don't need a king/queen in Braziers!

- We can do it!
  - There's an hotel concept here. So much work to do.
  - A leader takes the flak—if there's no leader, where does the flak go?
  - Braziers consists of work satellites, and each satellite has produced a leader.
  - Sometimes there's too much to think about.
  - Guidance/inspiration/firmness, but kindness is also needed.
  - Do we know how to handle it?
  - People who take power often don't know how to use it.
  - Is the enemy within? Do we just need someone to blame? Without a leader, people blame other people in the group.
  - Are we really leaderless? We have several leaders to oversee different areas of work (office administration, estate work, buildings maintenance, cooking and food, housekeeping). We see situations where a natural leader emerges, particularly taking charge in a crisis or a situation requiring rapid decisions, or taking responsibility for organising a particular event. Sometimes a leader evolves naturally and their authority is accepted by the group, without a formal mechanism and without formal recognition. But that lack of formality is more likely to lead to disagreement and lack of clarity and consistency.
- The forty-plus Members of Braziers elect a committee of seven, among whom the Chairperson is generally seen as the leader. The fifteen-or-so residents, who comprise the main workforce along with frequently-changing volunteers, do not have a single leader who can be described as Chief Executive or Managing Director. This is likely to make communication between the two groups more difficult. There is no mechanism to provide a single spokesperson/representative from the residents.

The lack of a single and recognised leader among the residents (as opposed to the informal, complex and subtle pattern of changing and evolving leadership) does make for certain problems (I think):

1. Who sees where change is needed and sets it in motion? Braziers works well, I think, following set procedures for repeating and predictable situations (rotas, lists of jobs, days off, regular decision-making meetings for day-to-day needs, allocation of duties etc). But there are times when the set systems are not enough or get outdated, and it is no-one's job to address this.

2. Who co-ordinates different work areas and decides where priorities lie? Too much specialisation of role can mean individuals guard their own departments at the expense of others, and no-one sees the whole.

3. Who picks up the unexpected, or the bits that others forget?

4. Who acts as mediator? Who does one turn to with a grievance or difficulty?

5. Who acts as representative and communicates with outside members?

6. Who determines major policy?

7. Who seeks to enthuse and inspire when morale gets low?

8. Who articulates and defines the central purpose of the whole organisation?

Of course, an officially-appointed leader might do none of these things, or do them badly. Good leadership is complex, and involves much delegation, much listening, much encouragement of leadership-qualities in others.

It is tempting to want a Boss person so one can have a scapegoat rather than risk taking responsibility for oneself.

- There needs to be a person willing to take responsibility for emergencies. This could be rotated, say each month. This would keep the power base with community members rather than with one person.

- If Braziers gets a leader, they need to come in when things are settled, otherwise we might set them up to fail. It is working without a leader, but there's no-one to consolidate things. A leader could possibly bring departments together.

- It would be good to have a community co-ordinator to bring things together. Not necessarily a leader. They don't have to live here, but with a good understanding.

- Groups usually evolve.

- If a leader were in place, some people might think there shouldn't be one—you can't please everyone.

- We've got a mission statement that makes it pretty clear that Braziers is meant to be moving on from hierarchical structures of the past, and to my mind this implies moving on from leaders and followers.

- I'm aware that we often want to project our difficulties on to a leader and use one as a scapegoat sometimes. This is not necessarily a good thing. Life would be easier if we had a leader who could bring us together, but finding the right person is very difficult if not impossible.

- If we knew how to do it, it would be wonderful, but learning to run Braziers by consensus with its problems is too difficult at the moment. Too idealistic.



## 3. Questionnaire

## BEING LEADERLESS

	Yes	No	D/N
<i>Would you prefer there to be a leader at Braziers?</i>	4	4	1
It depends: they could be overburdened.			
Not necessarily.			
Depends.			
Fence.			
No—but things would work better.			
<i>Has being leaderless given you more responsibility?</i>	9	4	0
Sort of.			
Not taken.			
<i>Is this preferable?</i>	5	4	0
Depends on 'to do' or 'more say'. Plus personal situation. Possibly made me harder. There could be an easier route. Selfish.			
Not a problem.			
Maybe.			
Benefits + drawbacks sometimes.			
<i>Has being leaderless made you stronger?</i>	5	6	0
Neither.			
I grew during my period here with a leader, but I was stronger to deal with situations when he left.			
<i>Do you think all at Braziers are better off with a leader?</i>	5	7	0
A few individuals might benefit but not the community as a whole.			
Depends—2			
But they don't know it.			
<i>Do you think there have been fewer disagreements at Braziers since being without a leader?</i>	2	4	3
Not applicable—4			
Only because fewer things have been confronted.			

There's no resolution to disagreements—though not more [disagreement].  
We deal with disagreements differently—less anger.

<i>Do you think Braziers can survive without a leader?</i>	6	4	1
Probably.			
Depends—2			
Hope so.			
Survive or flourish?			
<i>Would a leader be a 'safety net' for decisions?</i>	10	1	0
Depends—2			
Possibly not.			
Of course.			
<i>Would a leader be 'someone for you to turn to'?</i>	9	0	0
Not necessarily.			
Why not if s/he is a good one?			
Prefer the group.			
Hopefully.			
When I first came, I needed direction, but now I can see to look to everybody, so I wouldn't necessarily turn to a leader.			
Not on a personal level but yes on Braziers matters.			
For operational duties—yes. For friendship/talking—no.			
Depends on the person.			
<i>Would a leader bring people together?</i>	3	3	1
That's her/his job. Even a tyrant can do this but it's not the best way. Some honey required and not all vinegar!			
Should....			
Depends—3			
Not necessarily.			
Ideally.			
Both yes and no.			
Not necessarily.			
Half and half.			

**DOUGLAS HOLDSTOCK: 1933–2008***an obituary*

There were obituaries of Douglas Holdstock in *The Times* (22 January 2009) and *The Guardian* (13 January 2009), paying tribute to his medical work and, most of all, to his work as a founder-member of the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons and as an editorial consultant on the journal *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*. Both articles should be seen as complementary to Hilda's obituary which follows, and which deliberately concentrates on Douglas's connections with Braziers.

IT WAS Alan Clark who drew Glynn Faithfull's attention in 1985 to a very interesting introduction by Douglas Holdstock in the new reprint of Wilfred Trotter's *INSTINCTS OF THE HERD IN PEACE AND WAR* (Keynes Press), recently acquired by the Royal Society. This Foreword contained both reservations and new insights about how Trotter might have expected his ideas to develop.

An invitation was immediately dispatched for the two enthusiasts to meet. When Douglas and his wife, Mary, came, they were excited to find Braziers running courses on evolution, a subject that did not feature elsewhere at that time. Douglas Holdstock, Glynn Faithfull and John Woodcock found much to discuss. Later, Douglas and Mary themselves each ran a weekend at Braziers. His explored the new light on the night sky provided by the Hubble telescope. Mary's, with the film 'Bhaji on the Beach' at its core, focused on race relations in Britain, which required a clear and functioning balance of welcome, friendship, help and also an understanding of the need to comply with British law to promote peaceful coexistence. Both of them were passionately concerned to promote justice, fairness and opportunity based on right principles wherever inadequate provision could be related to funds being given to unworthy causes. The aim was to affect attitudes on local,

national and international levels, wherever debate, action or petition might succeed,

Professionally, people knew Douglas as a doctor (Consultant Physician in Gastroenterology and General Medicine) with a wide ethnic group of patients, since he worked at the hospital near to Heathrow, then called the Ashford Hospital, Middlesex. He listened carefully to what was said and would add a friendly comment, so a casual remark about not being able to visualise even ordinary things in one's head, whereas friends could enjoy whole scenes, prompted the welcome information that these different abilities were well known, the two extremes each representing 25% of the population, with 50%, in the middle, able to do both to a certain extent. Instant gratification!

Douglas contributed a number of excellent book reviews to *Research Communications*. Uniquely, he extended the regular form by considering where the book stood in relation to the author's former work, its accessibility in language and ideas and its place in contemporary thinking on the subject. With a non-specialist readership in mind, he sometimes referred to the type of imagery and breadth of reference employed by the author, thereby extending his readership.

In his Foreword to the *INSTINCTS*, Douglas Holdstock speculated on what changes in society Trotter might have expected his ideas to achieve. Human aggression views other groups almost as separate species, but he would surely hope that this might, by now, have been corrected by closer relationship with the intellect, logic, technology and interpersonal skills of the protective and socialized herds? If the resources for wars could then be devoted to an increasing spread of effective education on a global scale, might the world no longer exist as competing herds, but as one species? We can still work and hope.

*Hilda M. Salter*





Apply Day, October 2008

Fleeces for sale!



## SOCIAL INTEGRATION AT BRAZIER'S

*We are all like islands, separate at the surface but connected in the deep.*

William James

I am inspired to write this piece because I have found, despite not being so much a part of Braziers since the mid-1980s, that I have returned to a place where people are not just accepting of others' foibles, but go out of their way to understand. I have been a member of groups consisting of intelligent people where personal projections and stereotyping is rife, and I have been part of groups where no consideration for others has been thought necessary and where the survival of the fittest has been the norm. I have also experienced groups where high levels of consciousness have been unstintingly worked towards and where self-awareness has integrated with the struggle to empathize with others. S.C.

OUR EXPERIENCE of ourselves is dependent upon genetic make-up, our upbringing, growth of personal characteristics moulded by parents, siblings, elders and peer groups, plus circumstances. We all have a personal process, an individual impression of ourselves, and from that perspective see others. In turn we are seen from others' points of view which, of course, is nurtured through their individual development.

As adults, when we join groups, we rely on our personal history of behaviour developed since childhood. There are adaptations to make when joining any group—we want to feel accepted, we want to be 'part of' and so willingly knock off a few edges if it means we can feel settled within our new group. And most of us join groups most of the time. It is considered in our society to be 'unhealthy' for a person to wish to be permanently alone, even though that person may feel happy. And, we all have varying degrees of sociability. There are those who rely on responses from others for their thinking patterns to evolve. Equally there

are those who can only function by going away and thinking things through. And there's anything in between.

As shown by Solomon Asch, Gestalt psychologist (1907–1996), we can be so willing to conform to the group that our reason leaves us. In the early 1950s, Asch conducted experiments which showed how one third of group members were influenced by group consensus and agreed with the group, even though the group was wrong. Or, as Zhao Gao put it: 'Point at a deer and call it a horse'. Groupthink can develop via fears of feeling disloyal—anxiety concerning disloyalty can be a far greater force than reason and the group mind can be reinforced by those who lose their individuality. Wilfred Trotter acknowledged this phenomenon through biological reference :

'A whole organism is sensitive to the vagaries of a single cell—this helps compensate for that cell's loss of biological individuality.'

*Wilfred Trotter, INSTINCTS OF THE HERD IN PEACE AND WAR, 1915, p.18*

And Norman Glaister:

'... there is no room for doubt that human material can be profoundly influenced through herd suggestion which would be available for its use.'

*Norman Glaister, IMPLICATIONS OF THE GREGARIOUS HABIT IN MAN, 1975 Edition, p.16*

Norman Glaister went on to say:

'The integrative power of conscious membership of a multimental organism is ... ready to take charge of ... old-established needs and provide for them, while giving increasing attention to the larger life of the social organism.'

*ditto, p. 30*

and:

'... the multimental social organism will come into being, and will resume the resistive-sensitive conflict on a higher level.'

*ditto, pp. 40–41*

As groups mature and people adapt to each other, so different characteristics come to the fore. At the extremes, there are obvious leaders and there are those who fervently wish to stay in the background. Our society tends to favour the leader, seeing her/him as the successful one, the one to rely on, the one to look up to and ask advice of, and the one to blame when we can't take responsibility for ourselves. The unhealthy leader may become a tyrant, whereas the healthy one may nurture the group to fulfil its potential; the person in the background may steer from the rear, only making contributions from a place of profundity and wisdom, or they may make no effort at all and be carried by stronger members of the group, not reaching their personal potential in any way. Most of us fit in the middle, sometimes taking a leadership role and at other times, stepping back.

It is not until a group stabilises and each member feels confident in themselves as well as able to make worthwhile contributions to the group, that:

'Each individual tends to use the opportunity to become all that he or she can become. Separateness and diversity—the uniqueness of being 'me'—are experienced. This very characteristic seems to raise the group level to a oneness of consciousness.'

*Carl Rogers, A WAY OF BEING, 1980, p. 190*

This, of course, applies to primary groups, where people meet frequently through voluntary association deriving a sense of identity and belonging in a long-term setting. John Woodcock pointed out the following:

'... the preliminary to development of social consciousness and higher integration is the co-ordination of sub-groups—both specialised and un-specialised: and it is through this that the internal integration

and higher consciousness of the individuals is to be achieved. In this direction therefore is the next task confronting Braziers.'

*John Woodcock, Chairman of Braziers, 1975, in the Foreword to Norman Glaister, IMPLICATIONS OF THE GREGARIOUS HABIT IN MAN, 1975 Edition, p.16*

Social solidarity mostly becomes the norm within the framework at Braziers through mutual reliance when dealing with the house, work, visitors, in conjunction with the wide social network. This framework is supported by meetings where decisions are made via discussion, working towards a collective authority while encompassing complexities of differentiation produced by individual members and visitors. In my view, it is buoyant differentiation that keeps Braziers from sinking into an abyss of self-congratulation and mythical following.

At the present time, Braziers' traditional Sensory Process is rarely used structurally, but there appears to be a successful interdependence brought about by necessity, perhaps through being leaderless. There are arguments in the meetings and what could have been described as 'schisms' in the old days, but generally, Braziers is prolific in its production and cultural integrity within the limits of the twenty-first century, or despite those limits.

'Let us hope that more of us in this world can come to see that 'living in community' is not as difficult as we thought before; and that, given courage by this realisation, we can go forward to build a community which we need not be afraid of, which we can love because it and we will know what we are doing.'

*Glynn Faithfull in Research Communications 9 (1962): 'Introducing Differentiation', p.28*

No word on 'Social Integration' can be complete without varying views, so on the following pages I set out those of members of the Community.

*Sandra Cooper*

## **Integrative Social Recipe Experiment**

### FOOD FOR THOUGHTS

*A kitchen is an integral part of a home—a recipe to make a whole, by bringing all parts together. To create a new recipe, an approach that is original or unusual—an experiment—must be used.*

*Food can be a pleasure to be shared, liked, tried and enjoyed. Food can also create controversy and conflict. To some it is a passion to be explored; to others it is a chore to be ignored.*

*People can be controversial and create conflict—food is a subject that may be used as an excuse or focus to do so.*

Writing about food and its integral part in life—specifically intentional community life—has many similarities to writing about life. As I began to make notes or even as I began to think about this subject I realised that a lot of words relating to food also relate to life, sociology, emotions, senses, perceptions and feelings. To experience food, as it is to experience life, is to touch, taste, smell, see and hear. Food and experiences can be given, shared, processed, digested, remembered—even forgotten. Emotions and feelings—your own and those of others—can too be processed, shared, digested, remembered and forgotten.

We can waste food as easily as time since, to some, food is of little interest and considered merely as a necessary waste of time, although time spent sowing, growing, harvesting, processing, preparing or eating can be an opportunity to learn, exchange knowledge, talk, listen, relax, explore and much more. Experiences and flavours can be intense as can life. Food can be rich and exciting as can life. Food can be bland, as can life. Food can bring people together; some may be apparently repelled by certain foods and may use it as an excuse to be alone or as a metaphor for their dislike of someone/something else.

A food which one person finds comforting and enjoyable may be unsatisfying to another—it seems you will never please everyone.

Food and life are integrated. Without food there is no life. Without life there is no need for food.

*Stuart Birch*

## LAND, GARDEN AND EARTH

There is something deeply satisfying and nurturing in working on the land here at Braziers. For the past two and a half years I have been given the challenge and privilege of taking care of the walled kitchen garden, producing food for both residents and guests.

Working alongside volunteers of all ages, nationalities and backgrounds, I have witnessed many transformations in people; a sense of new-found energy, purpose or the simple joy of connecting with the earth. As we dig, sow, plant and harvest together in all weathers throughout the year, there can be a feeling of letting go, of calm contemplation or pure physical exertion that helps quieten the constant chatter of our minds.

There are also moments of frustration and disappointment that teach endless patience and perseverance. To work with nature rather than battling against her, valuing and supporting diversity, has been a key lesson for me. It is a constant learning process.

I firmly believe that one of the essential elements in maintaining our mental, physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing is reconnection with nature, the soil and our food supply. I have found nothing more rewarding than planting a seed, nurturing its growth, harvesting and then preparing the fruits of that labour to share a meal with others.

Happily this year has been one of productivity, creativity and exciting discoveries. The erection of the polytunnel and the arrival of more pigs has enabled us to grow more of our own food and further our efforts to become increasingly self-sufficient. The discovery of three Victorian underground rainwater cisterns, as a time when we are desperately trying to reduce our mains water consumption, demonstrated the vision and foresight of our ancestors; a lesson we would do well to heed today.

In celebration of our orchard, which every year supplies us with an abundance of fruit, we held our first open 'Apply Day'. Using traditional recipes and old apple presses we produced large quantities of our

own apple juice and cider. Following a visit by Judy Webb we are now listed on the map of ancient, working orchards in Oxfordshire, with some of our fruit trees approaching a hundred years in age. To replace those nearing the end of their lifespan we are continuing to replant with traditional English varieties.

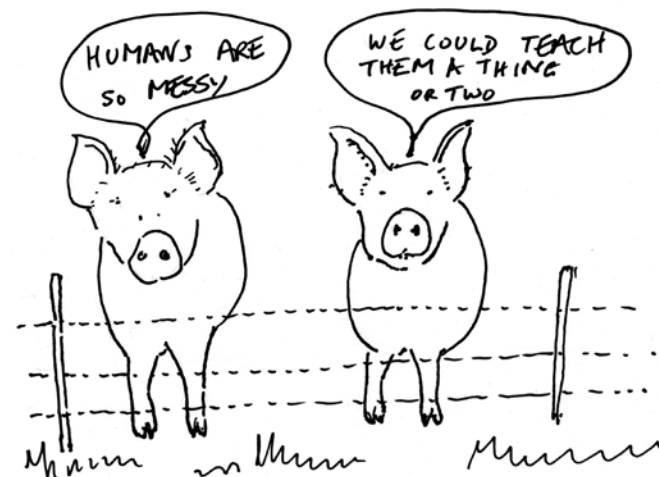
It has become obvious to me over the years that this land has a strong energy that draws many people to it. The sacredness of the sweat lodge, the celebration of each solstice and the festivals of music, dance and fire allow us all to reconnect and celebrate the healing power of mother earth. I would like to honour and thank all who have come to work, share or simply enjoy the beauty of this place.

Through each changing season I am constantly reminded of the tenacity of certain things, the vulnerability of others and the inevitability of change in the endless cycles of birth, death and rebirth. It is without doubt the land that has been my greatest teacher.

*'For him to sit or lie upon the ground is to be able to think more deeply and to feel more keenly. He can see more clearly into the mysteries of life and come closer to kinship to other lives about him....'*

Chief Luther Standing Bear

Kelly Carter



## KITCHEN AND GARDEN

*September 2008 report*

Our responsibilities are:

### *To ensure the smooth running of the kitchen*

Stuart coordinates ordering and storage of food, acquiring appliances, organising Aga servicing, training in health and hygiene, and a multitude of other food-related tasks (cider-making, pig-rearing, etc.) as well as cooking many guest meals. Charlotte provides back-up and covers food ordering in Stuart's absence (she co-ordinated the kitchen between October 2006 and March 2007). All residents and volunteers share in the cooking of lunches and dinners for the community. Some—Charlotte, Marianne, Catherine, Anna, Kelly, Simon—can produce guest-standard meals for larger numbers.

### *To ensure productivity of the kitchen garden and livestock*

Kelly coordinates the activities in the walled garden, greenhouse and polytunnel. She organises the planting plan, buys seeds, oversees the planting, maintenance and harvesting of Braziers' fruit and veg. She also deals with compost systems and other vegetable-related tasks as well as building fantastic networks with local groups for sustainability/farmers' markets, etc. She liaises closely with Anna re estate and vegetable-garden tasks, use of volunteer time for outdoor projects and helps organise and coordinate weekend work parties, etc.

Stuart helps with many of the outdoor food-related projects—building compost bins, pig pens, etc.—as well as the food production, and is doing a two-year correspondence course in smallholding, so all experience is valuable! Charlotte is also supposed to divide her time between kitchen and veg garden tasks and is currently doing the RHS Horticulture Level 2 course (exams in February). Stuart is day-to-day pig manager, while Charlotte deals with the sheep on a daily basis and Anna is chief chicken carer.

Our aims are:

*To increase the quantity of food Braziers can produce for itself, by making fuller use of the veg garden and polytunnel, managing the livestock better to ensure they are more productive (meat and eggs), taking advantage of the bounty of the fields and hedgerows to provide food for free, and researching creative ways to make use of by-products (fleeces, wool, surplus meat, veg and preserves, etc).*

*To source as much of our other food as possible from organic and/or local suppliers, in order to support the local community and, wherever possible, reduce Braziers' food miles and practice what we preach about sustainability.*

*To make best use of produce by freezing, packaging, preserving and labelling it, to encourage friends, family and the wider community to enjoy it and make appropriate donations!*

*To train more residents and volunteers to cook visitor-standard meals for large numbers (this can be from 12 to 20 residents/volunteers + up to 25 guests = 35 to 45 people)*

We have been extremely busy, both in the kitchen (with many mid-week bookings and limited availability of confident visitor-meal cooks), in the orchard and veg garden, and with looking after the livestock. With big increases in food prices, we have been trying to cut costs by making the most of the autumn harvest by bringing it to the table—and by storing and preserving as much as possible for the winter months. Kelly's enthusiasm, foresight and continuous planting, watering and weeding have proved fruitful(!), and we have been lucky to have returning volunteers, such as Siggie and Suzanna, who have helped enormously to process our produce.

There are two pigs fattening for slaughter in November, and we currently have twenty-eight sheep. The chickens are still roaming free, so supplies of eggs have been inconsistent or non-existent!

This month we have....

- Made nearly a hundred jars of jam: plum, blackberry, raspberry, blackcurrant and courgette with ginger and cinnamon, as well as thirteen jars of apple and marrow chutney.
- Frozen large quantities of apples, raspberries, blackberries, plums, green beans and parsley.
- Harvested and stored nearly 200kg of potatoes and loads of crates of apples.
- Harvested swiss chard, green (runner and dwarf) beans, beet-roots, celery, salad, cucumbers, herbs, courgettes and oh-so-many HUGE marrows—still coming, and the squash and pumpkins are just beginning.
- Created a successful polytunnel, especially for the tomatoes and chillies.
- Slaughtered the twelve male lambs and set aside frozen meat for future kitchen sales, rather than home consumption. We know we need to make a concerted effort to push for more sales and boost the coffers.
- Twelve sheepskins salting in the cowshed, ready to go to the tannery. These are an experiment (they can fall apart on processing, etc), but we will do accurate costings to price them sensibly and make a profit for Braziers.

*Stuart Birch, Kelly Carter, Charlotte Lochhead and Ruth Garwood*

### BRAZIERS WOODCHIP BOILER COMMUNITY HEATING PROJECT

Having worked as a renewable energy consultant in London prior to moving into Braziers in September 2007, I was rather interested in talk of a renewable energy solution for Braziers Park. When Roger Kelly arrived on the scene in January 2008, we felt it was the right time to push the project forward. Despite being plagued by poor advice from numerous so-called biomass boiler ‘experts’, who actually knew more about selling boilers than installing them in a manner suitable for Braziers, we did manage to submit a successful bid for £27,651 with Defra’s

Bioenergy Capital Grant Scheme. However, this still left us far short of the £170,000 or so required for just the main part of the project:

- Constructing a new barn in the polytunnel field, hidden from view from the Main House behind the hedge (to please the planners as much as anyone else). The barn will contain a boiler-room and a woodchip store. The boiler itself will be a fully-automatic woodchip boiler using technology designed and used on the continent for decades, where wood is a common heating fuel. The woodchip is piled on top of a 3-4m agitator plate, which has arms that rotate and help the woodchip fall into an auger (an Archimedes screw). As the auger rotates, it sucks the woodchip up into the boiler at the right speed to supply sufficient woodchip for the heating demand. Therefore all that needs to be done is to ensure that sufficient woodchip is dumped on top of the agitator plate by mini-tractor or shovel. During winter, the boiler will consume about one cubic meter per day.
- Preinsulated heat mains will be laid from the boiler house to the buildings to be served: the Main House, East Wing, Engine Room, Bothy, Barn, Garden Cottage and the greenhouse. These preinsulated heat mains lose only about 1° Celsius every kilometre.
- The preinsulated heat main will be connected to the Main House current heating system via a plate heat exchanger.

Ideally we would like to install central heating systems supplied by the woodchip boiler in all the buildings—currently only about half of the Main House has central heating, and the rest all relies on expensive and carbon-heavy electric heating. While the rest of these works are expected to cost ‘only’ an extra £50,000, obviously we can’t do it without the finances.

The project received a good boost when the Members agreed to provide up to £60,000 of funding for the project, and a further boost when we heard in January 2009 that we had been successful with a £50,000 funding bid from the National Lottery funded Community Sustainable Energy Programme. Combined with a roughly £20,000 government supported Interest Free Loan through the Carbon Trust for carbon-saving projects, our current funding total stands at about £155,000—enough, we feel, to start the project. In addition we will be applying for a £20-

30,000 grant from EDF Green Energy Fund in February 2009.

We won't know exact project costs until firm quotes come in for all the work. To reach this stage, we are employing suitably qualified project management engineering firm to design the project and put the various items of work out to tender. They will then assess and help us select the best firms to work with, oversee resultant contracts, and supervise the works until completion—expected to be September 2009, in time for the winter heating season.

There will be numerous advantages to Braziers from this project:

- Reduction of carbon emissions though consuming woodchips rather than oil and electricity. Woodchip is considered carbon-neutral as long as the woodchip comes from a local sustainable managed resource, where trees are planted to replace the ones cut down. The new trees suck as much carbon out of the atmosphere as is released when the old trees are burnt.

- Educational impact. The project can be used as an educational tool to teach others about sustainable energy projects carried out on a community level (the district heating part). Biomass boilers lend themselves to community heating schemes—due to the higher cost of biomass boilers compared to fossil fuel equivalents, it makes more economic sense to buy larger ones and supply multiple buildings off them.

- Improved heating service. Just with a new boiler, we expect the level of heating from the current radiators to improve. Once new radiators are installed, we will be able to offer an adequately heated venue for groups to use throughout the year.

- Financial savings. We have identified a local woodchip supplier (Woodcote-based, about four miles away) who can supply us with quality woodchip at a good price. Automatic woodchip boilers need dry woodchip to work, not the wet stuff that comes from instant chipping of hedges, branches etc. Wood needs to be seasoned/dried for about six months before it can be chipped and used, which adds considerably to the cost. Despite this, woodchip heating is about 30% the cost of oil heating, or about 25% the cost of electric heating, thereby saving Braziers almost £8,000 a year on oil for heating the Main House each

year, and an extra £8,000 if the all-electric heating was replaced with woodchip-fired central heating (in half of the Main House, the East Wing, Bothy and Garden Cottage).

Thanks to Anna's good work over the years, we already have some of our own wood resources developing on the estate which we can coppice, store, and chip using a rented chipper for the day. To be fully sustainable in woodfuel we would need to set about eleven acres aside for coppicing—equivalent to 70% of South Pig Trough. Perhaps, in years to come, we will see Braziers be fully self-sufficient and sustainable in energy for heating.

*Chris Flynn-Jones, February 2009; there have, of course, been developments since*



### A YOUNGER VIEWPOINT

In my opinion, Braziers can be pleasant at times because you have so many things there. There are computers that actually work, all the stationery you need, good food, toilets, gardens. It's like any house but ten times bigger and better.

It does seem a bit odd, though. I only come there every other weekend so it is a bit of a change from having breakfast with just four other people to having breakfast with lots of strangers. As I don't come so often I haven't really made a relationship with many of the people. To me, most of them are strangers.

Overall it is very friendly but a bit overwhelming.

*Flynn Faithfull*

## BEING AN ARTIST AT BRAZIERS

For many years, the International Artists' Workshop has been one of the dominant features of Braziers' year and the artists form almost part of the community. In the contribution that follows, one of the artists, Ellie Harrison, describes for a wider audience the experience of participating.

In August 2008, Ellie was invited to participate in Braziers International Artists' Workshop (BIAW) at Braziers Park in Oxfordshire. As a development from previous years, this workshop had a specific emphasis on collaboration and exchange: encouraging artists to abandon their established practices and experiment with working together. This year, for perhaps the first time, the workshop attempted to directly explore and develop the founding principles of its host venue, Braziers Park.

Braziers Park was founded in 1950 by Norman Glaister as the site for a continuing real-life experiment about the advantages and problems of communal living. For over fifty years, a changing community of residents have, through discussion, attempted to resolve many of the ongoing and reoccurring issues of this way of life, with the hope of developing a potential model for sustainable communities of the future. From 3rd to 19th August, 2008, sixteen artists from all around the globe were thrown together as an intensive reworking of the Braziers experiment—to see what impact this method of living, discussing ideas and working together could have on the process of art making.

As a way of introducing the artists to the community and allowing them a glimpse of what it may be like working with one another, Braziers Park put forward a number of manual labour tasks around the grounds. These tasks were presented to the group by their treasurer, John Sewell, using the 'Open Space' methodology, which insists that everything is entirely optional and reassures participants with rules such as: 'whatever you do will be the right thing to do', 'whatever time you start will be the right time to start' and 'if you are not happy just move on and try something else'. With such apparent freedom from

the outset, it was an initial surprise that nearly all the artists followed suit, selected a project and worked diligently on it for two to five days until it was completed. Ellie worked alongside Katy Beinart, Julia Deferary, Steven Eastwood, Evgenia Golant, Uraline Hager, Isabelle Krieg and Pauline Thomas excavating the site of a recently unearthed well and building a protective wall around its perimeter.

After the completion of the manual labour tasks, the working teams disbanded and the crux of the social experiment emerged—the subdivision of the larger group, through negotiation and conversation, into smaller, workable subgroups (or 'sub-herds' as Norman Glaister would term them), from which new creative projects could arise. Individual egos had to battle against each other for acceptance, recognition and dominance. At this point, Ellie began to question the whole notion of collaboration and wonder whether a 'pure collaboration', in which an idea is jointly conceived and owned by two people, is actually possible. Do all collaborations have an inherently dominant side—the side from which the idea emerges? She also began to question whether the utopian ideals of Braziers Park were even ideologically compatible with the ego-centred individualist mentality of the art world. Could artists learn to abandon their egos, to be taught selflessness (like the residents of Braziers Park) for the greater good of the artwork, and was there time for any of these radical changes in just two weeks?

Ellie's initial response to these questions was to stage an 'ego wrestling' contest amongst the artists, in which their supposed desire for success and dominance could be fought out literally, in the ring. A metaphor for the negotiation involved in the collaborative process. Ellie staged a small-scale wrestling tournament in the drawing room of the Braziers house on 13th August. She then toyed with the idea of holding a larger 'Royal Rumble' event in which all sixteen artists would partake in a survival-of-the-fittest wrestling challenge in front of a live audience at the Open Day on 17th August 2008. In the end this idea was not realised as, ironically, a consensus of participation from the artists was too much of a battle to achieve.

Despite this ongoing debate, Ellie was involved in several creative



collaborations with other artists. With Isabelle Krieg, she carried out a number of mini performance experiments around the Braziers grounds—climbing trees, vaulting gates, rolling down hills and spending time in the pig pen with the newly-christened pigs, ‘Tobias’ and ‘Carsten’. This allowed them time to discuss the objectives of the workshop, their own outlooks on art and to what degree it may be possible for them, as individual artists, to collaborate. On Isabelle’s suggestion, they then worked together to create a monument in the old barn to the somewhat ambiguous Norman Glaister term ‘super-normal’ (which in his mind describes a person who is nearing human perfection).

Ellie, Evgenia Golant and Isabelle Krieg explored the differences between their three languages by learning phonetically and performing the Russian song, ‘Am I Guilty?’—the documentation of which formed an interactive installation for the Open Day in which visitors could sing along and help themselves to ‘Kalashnikov’ vodka shots. Then, the team of eight artists who first worked together on the well project imagined what it would be like to be trapped at its bottom, by spending an hour together in the pitch darkness of the Braziers cellar and recording the ensuing conversation. This later formed ‘Sending Our Love Down the Well’, a sound installation for the Open Day in which the recorded discussion emanated up from the 11-metre depths of the well.

But finally, Ellie worked alone. Perhaps a result of the frustration of being unable to overcome the issues with collaboration she had identified and of being unable to fully understand the workings of other artists’ minds as well as her own, Ellie spent the final two days of the workshop working on her own project. For 5960 Photos, she compiled an unedited, chronological slideshow of all the digital photos taken by all the participants at BIAW from 3rd to 15th August. This slideshow was screened over the four-hour duration of the Open Day, with each of the images appearing on screen for just 2.4 seconds. Although perhaps considered a collaborative project by some, 5960 Photos was not the sort of ‘pure collaboration’, Ellie had first dreamed might be possible.



*Elephant for Bonfire Night, 2008*

*May Fair, 2008*



## TWO LECTURES AT BRAZIERS

Two recent lectures at Braziers have significantly raised the level of debate. Woody Wood was present at both and here describes the mood and the content of the lectures. We intend to reproduce scripts or transcripts of both lectures in a second 2009 issue of *Research Communications*, during the autumn, in an issue very much devoted to the future of Braziers.

### 1. Sustainability, Survival and Integrative Social Research

*An impression of the 2008 Glaister Lecture given by Roger Kelly last May*

THE CORE message that I took from this hard-hitting talk was that behind the sustainability question lie real threats to human survival. The portents are ominous yet we (societies and groups) do have a degree of choice in how we respond. The global becomes local at Braziers: partly due to its location, partly due to the ongoing integration of practical sustainable activity with feeling and thinking ('living it' as social research), it could yet be a beacon for those seeking a response to the future.

Opening up the narrative a bit [the full text will be published in *RC 26*] Roger starts by suggesting the links implied in the title, along the lines outlined above. He then reports on his own life-changing moment at a *Blueprint for Survival* talk, when he became committed to 'big picture' integration of all the issues facing us.

He traces the question marks that began to appear against the gung-ho optimism of endless human progress: starting (in the industrial revolution period) with the human costs and since moving on—once tools such as Gaia (as our self-regulatory yet fragile ecosystem), Footprint and Impact (see below) had become available—to the damage being done to the environment and other life-forms.

Roger draws attention to the critical equation  $I = P \times A \times T$ , where total human Impact is given by multiplying together the Population, the level of Activity (or affluence) and the Technologies used to deliver it. Looking at these in turn he notes that most optimists pin their hopes on better technologies, though there are limits to the reduction in total impact that better technology alone can achieve. Likewise activity/affluence is problematical: how do we tell the teeming billions of the third world that they should not aspire to what we take for granted? On the other hand showing by example that reduced affluence in the first world need not mean an impoverished quality of life could make a contribution—despite little sign that most people are ready to accept less at the present time. As for population, Roger sees little chance of large-scale voluntary population reduction under present conditions.

Having set the scene on our predicament, Roger asks how other societies have responded (in their own localities) to overcrowding and resource depletion. In doing so he recommends and draws on *COLLAPSE* by Jared Diamond, where many examples are explored in depth. Some of these are shared with us and provide much food for thought: a valuable section of the talk. The responses fall into two categories: those societies that found ingenious ways to come into equilibrium with their environment and achieve stability over long time spans, and those that failed to do this, flourished for a time but ended in cataclysmic collapse.

Roger follows Jared Diamond in arguing that our whole planet is now one society confronting these choices. We do have some positives including awareness of the past, good information-flows and potentially beneficial technologies. On the negative side are our destructive technologies, the knock on effect of global interlocking and of course the much greater population. Depending how well lessons are learnt, Roger outlines a 'positive' scenario in which there will be some devastating consequences of climate change over the coming century and he hints at a 'negative' scenario in which perhaps 80% of the human population will be wiped out by 2100.

The last section of the talk looks at the three possible responses to what we face: 'head in sand', 'adaptation' and 'mitigation'. The head-in-

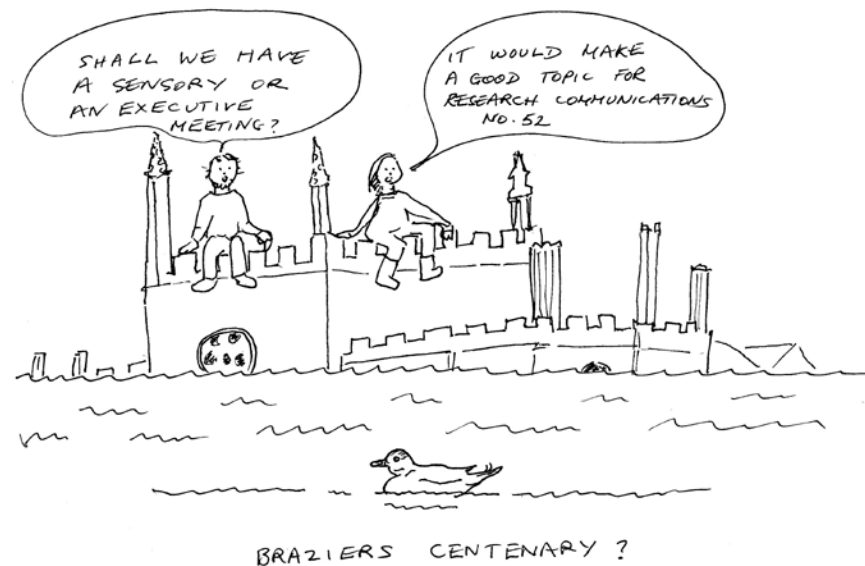
sand approach is a very common one: Roger gives the example of the years before the Second World War. The adaptation approach argues that we can't stop it so we must adapt to it. A point he makes here is that our islands, and the mid South in particular may be relatively favoured by climate change. Mitigation is about acting now to reduce the impacts, which Roger divides into government led initiatives like reducing CO2 emissions and serious lifestyle changes that amount to alternative societies capable of surviving the period of chaos (or at least having some chance).

This leads Roger back to Braziers. He argues that the founders asked us to be at the cutting edge of evolution, which today means radical measures of both mitigation and adaptation. He feels that Braziers has in fact already started down this path and that we should value that. He looks at this process under the headings of land (including balancing different uses), buildings, energy, transport, a low-cash economy and lastly community structure, including its processes and its balance of work, relaxation and celebration.

Roger sees the integration of all the practical activity with the 'intuitive, creative, emotional and rational' as being our 'integrated social research' and potentially a model that we can demonstrate to the world. However he also feels strongly that the particular tool of Sensory/Executive process should no longer be stressed in our outreach. This is for three reasons: the words mean nothing outside the Braziers community; the methodology—groundbreaking at the time—is now part of the mainstream of social psychology; and after fifty years of practice at Braziers it has not produced results that can be held up 'as an example of how human groups should operate and interact'.

Now it is possible to disagree with Roger on this last point while appreciating the broad sweep of his assessment of our situation, and being both inspired and challenged by the role of living integration that he puts forward for Braziers.

Woody Wood  
April 2009



## 2. The Future of Braziers

*A preview of a talk by Veronica Wallace at the Members' Weekend, 1 Feb. 2009*

VERONICA Wallace had already started to speak when I entered the room. Although not understanding all that she was saying, I soon realised that her talk was affecting my life. What do I mean by this statement? I mean that my own model of social dynamics was being challenged by her insights. Also that my view of Braziers—as being a special place with some special people but unable or unwilling to move beyond the great original insights of its founders—could be wrong. Later, I agreed to preview the talk in this journal.

Reading Veronica's text carefully, three features struck me: first, Veronica's unashamedly non-academic approach; second, her commitment to the Braziers ideal of working for a better world; and third, her resolve to re-evaluate the theory and the experiment on its merits, in the light of what we now know. As an essay, it was a hard read at first because some of the ideas went deeper than the words suggested and

some words had different layers of meaning. So this preview is longer than first intended because: (a) the talk is so important, a possible turning-point for Braziers; (b) it could be autumn (*RC26*) before it gets printed in full; (c) presenting some of the ideas in alternative language may be helpful to some.

As Veronica set out her script, she began with pages headed ‘The Objective’, ‘What Perspective?’ and ‘What Model?’, which we saw in the overhead projector. I didn’t understand the full significance of these key concepts at first, and shall come back to them.

The opening section of the talk was historical and biographical, charting the path of Norman Glaister towards the Braziers experiment. The first hint that this was to be a critical as well as a supportive overview—well suited to the ‘Future’ theme—came when the change in types description from Sensitive and Resistive (to the need for change) to Sensory and Executive (meeting styles) was noted. Not only noted but with the comment, ‘I think we have been diminished by the loss of the original meanings’.

In another key insight, Veronica qualifies Norman Glaister’s famous statement: ‘Society cannot give a lead to individuals on going beyond self-interest, since society has not done so itself’ [my paraphrase]. She carefully distinguishes between ‘The System’ (the State in its broadest sense) and the communities of Civil Society, many of which do feature altruism and co-operation. This is exactly the distinction that we have learned to make around Devolve!\*

I’m sure that all present found Veronica’s timeline of social/historical events (which she presented on screen) illuminating, once the significance of the colour coding became clear. For example, the birth of the Co-operative Movement (1844) was contemporary with the UK State’s first war to force Opium into China and its acquiescence in the Irish Potato famine (food exported to England throughout).

\*Devolve! is a thinktank aiming to support devolution and the decentralisation of power (‘closer to the people’). It has developed ideas on complementary social types as tools towards the empowerment of civil society.

After noting that a key aim of Braziers was to see the BIG picture—one meaning of ‘integrated’—Veronica examined the Braziers method in more detail. In the process she introduced her two key concepts: our model(s) of understanding as tools for action and the perspective to which the model is relevant. ‘Perspective’ as not only the underlying assumptions/beliefs but as the purpose/goal for which the model as an action tool may or may not be appropriate. (Veronica later quotes the example of the leopard and the deer having two different perspectives on the same vista [visual model].)

Expanding on this theme, Veronica argues that the original Trotter/Glaister model, incorporating facts known at the time, was ‘mainly accurate but too simple’ to handle all the information and insights now available to us. For example:

- The notion of the majority [the 95%] as an undifferentiated ‘herd’ has been overtaken by better understanding of the complexity of both anthropoid and human groups. So ‘we need to understand significant existing models’ of human types ‘finding the common ground in conflicting theories and beliefs’ and integrating them where possible into ‘a more comprehensive and inclusive model’.
- True to its time, the model was nested in a hierarchical and evolutionary viewpoint in which lower classes, lesser peoples and earlier generations could be seen as ‘no more than brute beasts’.
- Again, it was a very male perspective on evolution that is now open to challenge by broader understanding.
- There was an explicit assumption that consciousness was the prerogative of ‘evolved’ humanity—now also challenged both by anthropology and by work on the structure of the brain and related studies.
- The model predates understanding of the left brain/right brain interaction. Veronica reports (quoting sources) that the left hemisphere controls the language centre, is rational, reductive, atomist, tends to defend its model(s) of reality against awkward anomalies that come to light (i.e. is resistive) and generally *suppresses* the more wholistic, subjective, questioning (i.e. sensitive) right hemisphere with its intuitive connections to others and to nature. [In this sense the rise of our rational ‘left brain’

civilisation may have gone hand in hand with a *retreat* from the group mind phenomenon exhibited by many of our fellow creatures—see below.] Veronica suggests that we invite speakers from the Scientific and Medical Network for current thinking on these important questions.

- Veronica goes on to question the mantra ‘conscious of the process of which we are a part’. Why aren’t we conscious at all times? This opens two trains of thought.

The first is the existence, supported by evidence, of a ‘filter’ that limits the enormous flow of information hitting us to what we can handle, what is deemed ‘significant’. But this ‘can create blank spots in our consciousness’ as information is filtered out—compounding the left-hemisphere rejection of information that doesn’t fit our cherished model. This blocking can lead, for example, to our not seeing crises coming....

The second strand, noted above, to some of which Veronica has already drawn attention (hierarchy, patriarchy, left-brain ‘progress’, linear time), may be put as ‘are we conscious of the assumptions underlying our model?’ (i.e., the perspective). She goes on to note the assumption (or lack of one!) of limiting population growth to what the planet, with finite natural resources, can sustain. She also notes the assumption of progress towards ‘civilisation’. We learn that this properly means ‘citification’: exactly what we see. Veronica notes that less people on the land is actually taken as a measure of development! And that the flip side of this is more city poverty and crime and an increasingly top-heavy and stressed socio-economic system. The drift of Veronica’s argument, as I read it, is that these errors were socially understandable in Trotter’s time, partly so at the foundation of Braziers, but hardly so today.

After some thoughts on the essentially social nature of the present ‘economic’ crisis, Veronica returns to the issue of models of understanding, of the perspectives and goals that underpin them and which in turn they serve—but this time focusing on the group mind.

She asks: is a group with a shared model of understanding, all able to act accordingly, already a group mind? Or does it become a group mind and a ‘contribution to the evolution of consciousness’ only when

it is aware of ‘all the processes of which all people are a part’, understanding the various underlying assumptions and ‘all flaws and inadequacies’? Are contributions through normal communication methods enough? Or could an instantaneous group mind exist, as it seems to for many creatures?

Veronica argues that Trotter and Glaister believed this last to be true—but that existing group minds were ‘primitive’. They would need to be led forward by an elite group of fully self-aware educated people.

Following a detour that takes in Haeckel’s theory of recapitulation and questions whether education as we know it helps or hinders the maturing of young people to ‘pass beyond’ the recapitulated stages of our human story so far ... the group mind is further considered by reviewing the evidence from experiments with animals and insects, from identical twins and even from the behaviour of particles in quantum physics!

Finally, Veronica speculates as to whether every species has its own group mind, and even whether all species ‘except possibly us’ are in tune with one another to some degree as ‘the web of life’. This notion contributes a new dimension to the concept of Gaia as a planetary system of interconnected feedback loops, always attempting self-correction. [If the most powerful species on Earth is hopelessly out of tune at this level then the observed events now taking shape become understandable in the broadest sense.]

The conclusion from Veronica’s line of thought in this amazing *tour de force* is that at Braziers, as well as being sensitive to the need to incorporate much new wisdom into our model, we also need to shift our perspective: tapping into a global mind means ‘commitment to the needs of our planet as well as the needs of humanity’.

Woody Wood  
March 2009

**JOHN MURRELL***an appreciation*

IT MIGHT seem ridiculous for two people to combine as editors when one did email but used a lap-top only as a word processor, and the other had many computer skills but no email address. Living, also, two hundred miles apart and meeting only two or three times a year, the two now-retired editors of *Research Communications* had nevertheless been acquainted with each other for a long time, and, in the best Braziers tradition of putting unlike minds together, set out to make a go of it.

John's outstanding gifts as editor are his clarity of mind, logic, patience and commitment to balance. Text benefitted greatly from his querying a choice of vocabulary or sentence construction to make it more accessible to different people. Attending Braziers' meetings regularly, he was well placed to pick up any negativity that he felt deserved serious attention and presentation in print. Also, in the interest of balance, and aware that student-volunteers sometimes caught the essence of Braziers, in part, but lacked the full skills to express it, John saw that the charm of the language actually added to the writer's helpful appreciation: this too was included.

The visual impact of *Research Communications* from the change of format, font, pagination, consistency in presentation and thought about dividing lines were all John's work, along with the endless corrections to text without other mistakes being made by the computer in the process. 'You could say I edited it', he commented when I asked him. But that gives no idea of the hours of unrelenting thought and work it entails. The presentation of photographs and paper quality, too, were his speciality.

The form of John's input in *Research Communications* might have been new, but he has always been, for Braziers, an observer and recorder, attending SC meetings when possible with suggestions to improve

the structure of their meetings by organizing a rota of the members to act in turn as convener, and further their sense of responsibility to the COM by recording conclusions and the degree of consensus. Such recommendations found their way to AGMs and *Research Communications*. Similarly, years ago John proposed that their three subgroups would better represent the whole of the Sensory Network's membership if random sampling were used in forming the subgroups. He also pressed for better reporting of each subgroup discussion by a single rapporteur to avoid tedious repetition. The discipline required was more than the groups could stand!

John has recently taken a supporting role in encouraging a new convener of a Braziers course and, in the past, convened courses on both Psychology and Massage as well as several jointly with Glynn Faithfull and John Woodcock.

He lived in Braziers with Ann, his then wife, and their three daughters, from 1966-68, being made a Member in 1967. It was his letter to *The Times* which brought John Woodcock and other visitors for discussions on evolution. In fact, whether John speaks as Devil's Advocate or patrols the roof regularly to report on incipient problems (he even mended a finial one Sunday afternoon with Glynn Faithfull and Immo Doege to save Braziers hundreds of pounds), he is always concerned about the wellbeing of Braziers Park School of Integrative Social Research as the living experiment or as virtual college.

Carry on, John!

*Hilda M. Salter*

## REMEMBERING MARGARET & GLYNN FAITHFULL

THE FEBRUARY 2009 Members' Weekend included a retrospect of the contribution to Braziers of Glynn and Margaret. Among written items specially enjoyed were these.

*A poem by Dante that Glynn liked:*

Love as he talks with my mind,  
About my lady fair,  
Tells many things of her to me,  
That cause my thoughts to err...  
For flames of fire her beauties are,  
Lit by a tender soul  
Which shatters evil, or makes hearts  
By honest thinking whole.

*and a prose poem by Margaret:*

Throw out the old  
Bring in the new  
A time of reassessment and appraisal  
The dried flower arrangements, friends of winter, go.  
Bring in a world of affluence, a house of gold bursting with daffodils,  
primroses,  
narcissi, and then still more.  
Old patched trousers do their last proud play, and then out for  
cleaning rags...  
The sun is poking his finger round the door...  
The call, the challenge is there.  
Throw winter apathy away.  
Sing in the new.

## EXPLORING INTEGRATION

'INTEGRATION' has become an iconic buzzword these days, almost on a par with 'ecology'. It manages to combine touchy-feely 'wholistic' overtones with scientific sophistication. Who would dare not to integrate? Trouble is, without definition it can mean different things to different speakers, which can lead to crossed wires in discussions. At Braziers, this matters.

So throwing down a few possible definitions, not as a complete overview but to hopefully open up an exploration, here we go.

1. Integration as 'adding up': this is close to the literal meaning of the word, e.g. in mathematics. Two examples. Adding up the consequences of millions of individual actions to note their social or ecological impacts. Adding up the combinations of rising pollution, resource depletion, social stress, growing antibiotic resistance, escalating populations and so on in terms of total effect.

2. Integration as trying to see 'the big picture' of life in all its aspects: stepping back from the detail, the viewpoint, the anger of the moment.

3. Integration as seeing what you do every day as a small but valid part of a bigger social story, of civil society at work.

4. Integration as fitting 'present time' into a 'story in time'—both learning from history and responding to predictions of times to come.

5. Integration as joining up our thinking/ideas and/or our feelings/fears/hopes with our activities/behaviour/choices. This could be considered the basic meaning for Braziers as a learning platform.

6. Integration as bringing together Sensitive (to new possibilities) and Resistive (to threats to the vision) types/modes of being in a (hopefully) complementary and productive 'leadership' team. This was of course the original Braziers intention.

7. Integration as meshing Sensitive-Resistive understanding into a network of other descriptions of complementary (or conflicting)

types/modes in order to create a more comprehensive working model of social dynamics. This, I would argue, could and should underpin a 'second leap' for Braziers that could put it once again at the cutting edge of social thinking.

Woody Wood  
May 2009

### THE BACK PAGE

*A wry look at this journal!*

'AN ANOMALY built *on* an anomaly built *in* an anomaly' is a phrase you almost expect to hear from a visitor to Braziers, maybe with a rider expressing surprise about how long it's kept going ... and a few comments about English eccentricity. In the main, *Research Communications* takes a rather serious view of Braziers. It looks, and finds, and applauds, real social experiment, even if it sometimes has to strain to do so. Take everything in this magazine as serious research, if you will—and it is, in a gentle way. Add a bit of afflatus, and we're researching 'the phenomenology of Braziers'.

Maybe we should play it up a bit more still? Is *Research Communications* to Braziers what the cameras are to 'Big Brother'. Are we missing a vast opportunity to rescue Braziers from bankruptcy, for ever?

If so, what other opportunities are we missing? We hope not one! In this issue, we've tried at least to record the actual experience people have had, 'being leaderless', and we've tried to draw a collective picture of Braziers at work, salting sheepskins, entertaining visiting groups, and lighting bonfires. In short, there's a snapshot here of Braziers, and like all snapshots, it probably struggles to fit in all the right details. There's little emotion allowed in a research publication, so if a few of the 'leaderless' contributions give a hint of pain, behind all the variety of enterprise here, a journal like this can scarcely speak of it. 'Big Brother' can, of course, and has the edge partly because it shows what's happening almost in real time, as well as without comment. Can 'Big Brother'

properly be described as the Braziers of today? I can't imagine there isn't already a whole academic literature about it....

What is research, in the context of our title? How far did Norman Glaister see Braziers as academic research, and how far as practical experiment? 'Research Communications' seems to imply the first, but probably without hundred-per-cent accuracy. It certainly should be speculating on the direction his research would take now, nearly sixty years on. We hope it will. Thankfully for us as editors, he'd surely have been a keen observer of the 'leaderless' period of the last twelve months. We've permitted ourselves to print a variety of viewpoints about leaderlessness, but we've given ourselves the luxury of not venturing one of our own. We're researchers! In one of our more nostalgic modes, but without getting immersed in the nostalgia, we might research how far Glaister saw himself as a leader, maybe noting that by being the researcher inside his own experiment, he deliberately held an untypical role: rather more than observer, but certainly not führer, guru or bureaucrat. We all assume he was benign in what he set up, but we English always worry about researchers....

Or is *Research Communications* really a historical journal? Published annually, we're bound to have a nostalgia slant—our news is history before it reaches us. We have a tiny chance to be less historical, in 2009, for we are planning two issues this year ... though just to catch up! We rather hope the next issue will open up some debates. Is the journal allowed actually to participate, or only to record?

In its middle history, does Braziers go to the hoteliers and the managers, or does it go to the idealists and visionaries? Has a social experiment become an environmental one? What other new challenges does the Twenty-First Century offer, spiritually too? How far are the debates of Braziers a spectacle of clashing personalities, and how far are they struggles for the soul of the place? Can they be fought out in these pages? One thing's certain. We'd like to go on asking you a few questions, and must warn you that anything you say may be taken down and used as evidence....

*Colum Hayward, May 2009*



