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BRAZIERS PARK SCHOOL OF INTEGRATIVE SOCIAL
RESEARCH,
IPSDEN, WALLINGFORD, OXON OX 10 6AN

Telephone: Checkendon (01491) 680221 & 680481

Editorial Board

Hilda M. Salter B.A.
Evelyn Woodcock M.A.
John Woodcock

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Editorial

The fact that the Millennium celebrations and Braziers' 50th Anniversary both occur in the year 2000 naturally results in a preoccupation with time. It features prominently in this number. Maurice Roth, in his Glaister Lecture, traces the changes to Braziers' house since 1950, and Sarah Wood records the history of Braziers' land over a much longer term. Penny Pitty's paper clearly establishes a resonance between Norman Glaister's convictions and contemporary scientific ideas.

In March this year the longest period of time that can be studied was the subject of "The New Universe Story", a talk given at Braziers by Michael Colebrook, a marine biologist. (His pamphlet with the same title is included in the book list which forms part of the Timewalk insert in our centre pages.) On the same day, John Woodcock gave the talk printed here, on "Reassessing Braziers' Vision". This placed Michael Colebrook's talk in a Braziers' context. The New Universe Story, John said, was called "the process of which we are a part" by Norman Glaister, who took from Wilfred Trotter the concept of stages of differentiated union in evolution, and from the physicist and philosopher L.L. Whyte the theory that there is a persistent tendency towards differentiated union throughout the universe's history. This is continually confirmed and its significant details extended and updated by modern science. However, Norman Glaister founded Braziers with a commitment to "paving the way" for what he, uniquely, saw as the next stage, that of differentiated human union - a stage awaiting completion in the future. This commitment has traditionally been at the back of Braziers' experimental group work and of its sensory/executive method, a long-term ultimate aim in what we do.

Another initiative, again honouring the vitality of Norman Glaister's evolutionary thinking, happened at the August Festival weekend, taking the practical, visible form of a Cosmic Timewalk around the perimeter of Braziers. A map of the walk, with a key to the seven major stages in the universe's development to date, was given to the participants, who set out together along the woodland path, following in the footsteps of creation. Each stage was marked by a sphere, made specially by Ken Chiba and hung from branches high up. Simon Nisbett's music on the mbira accompanied us as we stopped to contemplate each stage. The walk ended in Braziers' courtyard, and our front cover shows Ken's final, largest sphere. (Map, key and a book list are in the centre page insert in this issue.) At the same weekend we celebrated human history through our traditional evolutionary meals, prepared by Pauline Heffes and the Houseteam, and enacted a Mayan creation

myth and a fairy tale revealing the growth of human consciousness, under the guidance of Norman Pope, an Insight Drama teacher.

We hope that Braziers will continue to develop the means whereby the increasing number of all those visiting the house and grounds, including those coming for their own group purposes, will be made aware of Braziers' wider concerns. Developing these wider concerns and the means for their dissemination will be the ongoing responsibility, into the next millennium, of all Braziers' Members, Associates and Friends. Braziers has much to celebrate already after 50 years, and the ideas of its founder Norman Glaister are now becoming confirmed increasingly, as Penny Pitty's article shows. The personal value of Braziers to its friends has been demonstrated by their remarkable generosity in helping to pay for the upgrading of the old buildings, which Maurice Roth describes in detail. We look forward to Braziers' all-round development continuing, and to its being recorded in future numbers of Research Communications.

The Editors

Braziers Park - The Buildings

Maurice Roth

This Annual Norman Cloister Lecture was given at Braziers on 16th May 1999. Maurice Roth is Treasurer of Braziers and has for a long time served on the Maintenance Committee. He lives at Braziers.

Introduction

Previous Glaister lectures have dealt with the philosophy or the people of Braziers but, being an Engineer by profession, I have chosen to talk about the buildings, and to present a history of their maintenance and improvements from 1950 to the present day. The previous history of the buildings is well documented in "Braziers Before the Community", written by Clarence Cross and published as a Braziers Research Communication in 1982.

I have obtained most of the information for this paper from the minutes of the Committee of Management and the Executive Sub-Committee, which the Director of Research has recently put in order. The Sensory Committee Minutes have also provided a few points. Also from reminiscences of some of those who were around at the time, as unfortunately the earlier minutes are somewhat brief. Information for the period from 1986 onward is from my own records, which are more detailed. A Maintenance Committee was set up in 1987, the first members being Glynn Faithfull, Maurice Roth and John Woodcock. It produced regular minutes and annual reports and these have been of great value.

In 1951 the main building was listed as Grade II. In 1985 it was regraded as II*. This is the second highest grade, which includes only 4% of all listed buildings (1% are Grade I). There are very few Strawberry Hill Gothic buildings which probably explains the high grading. Also in 1985, the Granary, the Barn and the Garden Wall were listed in their own right, but as Grade II, rather than II*. This gave rise to some confusion, as it was not clear whether other outbuildings were listed, and if so at what grade. This was resolved in 1996 when the South Oxford District Council obtained a ruling from the Department of Environment, who quoted The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 1(5): "In this Act 'Listed Building' means a building which is for the time being included in a list compiled or approved by the Secretary of State under this section; and for the purposes of the Act:- (A) any object or structure fixed to the building; (B) any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which,

although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1984, shall be treated as part of the building." So all the buildings, except those listed Grade II, are Grade II*. It is not necessarily an advantage to own a listed building. It is generally recognised that repairs and upkeep will cost four times as much as a non-listed building. Furthermore English Heritage, whose function it is to uphold the regulations, are required to regard the building as being more important than the people in it and may not support their wishes.

The Main Building

Norman Glaister, with the help of colleagues, purchased the building for £8,500 in February 1950, not long after the Second World War. It is doubtful therefore if it had received proper maintenance for at least ten years. A Report and Valuation prepared by Grant, Ware & Nelson dated 25th October 1949 mentions quite a lot of roof leaks, the possibility of dry rot, and says that a great deal of redecoration would be required. The outbuildings, on the other hand, seem to have been in reasonable condition. They suggested a value of £8,500, which was considerably less than the asking price of £12,500.

There is a note in the first meeting of the Committee of Management saying that they were making an allowance of £2,000 for repairs and maintenance (about £34,000 at present day prices). The second meeting of the Executive Sub-Committee estimated that between £50 and £100 would be required for the repair of the roof. For the first 10 years there is little mention of repair or maintenance in the minutes. There was a post for a paid resident maintenance man and this was occupied by several people as, in those days, there was a regular turnover of staff. From then on comments begin to appear about loose slates, leaky downpipes, and general deterioration of the roof. The minutes are sparse at first, but slowly become more frequent, though for many years not serious and within the bounds of what Braziers could cope with.

In 1958 mention is made of the restoration of exterior fabric and in 1959 of repairs to the library roof and chimney. In 1959 also there is the first mention of the Aga chimney being blocked; this was a recurring problem for the next 40 years as it became a popular place for birds to build their nests, which caused unpleasant fumes in the kitchen. In 1991 the chimney was repaired and pointed.

In 1960 there is the first mention of rot. Not dry rot, fortunately, but a type of wet rot. This became another recurring problem, sometimes becoming serious - as in 1991 when it affected the entrance to the library. In that case a portion of the roof had to be cut away and replaced. The work was done by Rentokil at a cost of

£4,103. In 1961 rot was found and dealt with in room 3 and it was realised that this was due to the state of the roof. From then on, right up to 1996 when the roof was properly repaired, there were problems with water coming into room 3. Even worse outbreaks of rot affected other parts of the roof and this is dealt with more fully under that heading.

There have also been periodic infestations by death watch beetle and by woodworm. In 1979, following an inspection by Rentokil, death watch beetle was found in the cellar, woodworm on the second floor, and wet rot above room 6 (now rooms 7, 8 & 9). The work involved in remedying all this was not fully completed until 1981. In 1991 death-watch beetle was found in room 8 and repairs cost £651. Then in 1992 wet rot and death-watch beetle were found above room 20 and it cost £4,729 for Rentokil to repair this.

There have been few problems with the cellars, though they are damp and care must be taken what to store in them in case of deterioration. In 1965 a brick dividing wall in the cellar was removed in order to make a TV room. In 1990 rot was found on the steps leading down to the wine cellar so the wooden steps were replaced by brick ones.

In 1966 there is the first mention of repairs to the rendering of the loggia. This is another recurrent problem which has still not been fully solved. During the 1980's the glass roof of the loggia was replaced by corrugated plastic and some of the exterior piping was re-routed. Around 1970 a large chunk of the dining room ceiling fell in and an appeal was launched to obtain money to repair it.

In September 1970 there is a mention in the Sensory Committee minutes of one Braziers member who did not want to live in the building because of its dilapidated condition. Then in 1977 the Sensory Committee expressed concern for the fabric of the house and asked whether we were living on the capital of the house, without spending what it demanded to keep it in good condition. There were even cases of organisations refusing to hire Braziers for their courses because of the state of the roof.

In 1972 a WC was added to the top bathroom. In 1975 the two downstairs lavatories were tiled, at the instigation of the Sensory Network Group. In 1996 a shower was installed in room 1. In 1982 an architect, Chris Pearce, drew up a plan of the building with a schedule for repairs. None of these were onerous. However, following this and under his supervision room 6 (the SE wing) was divided into smaller single bedrooms. In 1984 the NW and SW wings were similarly divided. In 1990 work started on the repair of the rendering, a job which

lasted several months. It was done by Brian Pyke at a cost of £1,890. In 1968 new sinks and draining boards were installed in the scullery. Following a hygiene inspection in 1989 the quarry tile floors in the larders and scullery were renovated. Following another inspection in 1992 the Environmental Health Officer requested new floors in the scullery and larders, and new tiles on the scullery walls. The work was done by Latimers at a cost of £4,544. The COM has always made a point of complying fully with the wishes of the Health and Safety Inspector in the matter of kitchen hygiene, and consequently we have never been required to do anything particularly upsetting. Contrast this with another ARCA college, Knuston Hall, who had to have their kitchen walls lined with stainless steel.

In 1995 the office was moved to what had been the TV room, the TV was moved to the turret room, and the office became a smoking room. In this year, too, the Printing Office was converted into an office for the use of Friends of Braziers, and the former Back Office was converted into a bedroom for the use of Bernard Faithfull!

The Flat

The flat, now rooms 24 and 25, was at first occupied by Dorothy Glaister. In 1964 it was altered to allow access to the outside lavatory from inside, and a basin was installed. In 1981, following the death of Dorothy Glaister, the flat was altered to provide two separate rooms, one for the use of visitors and the other for Bernard Faithfull, the latter room having an outside door and a new window in the west wall. Later on, the first room was used by Maude Melvin. In 1992 the flat, by now known as rooms 24 and 25, was renovated to provide accommodation for Glynn and Margaret Faithfull, and a shower was added in 1995. Then in 1998 the rooms were again fully renovated for our Housekeeper, Pauline Heffes.

The Roof

From the beginning the roof was inspected regularly, but initially there was little to do except replace a few slates. In 1960 for instance all that was needed were some slates, the replacement of the corrugated iron over the woodshed and the repair of the roof of the pottery. In 1961 Geoffrey Rayner, an architect, surveyed the roof. More slates were needed; the guttering, and the zinc on the trap door from the turret room, were renovated. However, it was recognised that to repair the roof properly would cost more than could be afforded. The stone finial above the turret was in danger of falling and it was agreed that it would have to be taken down. Two months later the residents took it down; the parts can still be found scattered around the estate, most of them in the copse in the water garden. Work

started on roof repairs but it was nearly four years before they were completed, in this case mainly due to the fact that the contractors were dilatory. In 1970 it was agreed to repair the roof over room 6 (now rooms 8 & 9), because an architect's report by George Ripley had revealed that there was subsidence. By the end of the year scaffolding had been erected and work was under way. In 1972 some emergency repairs were required to the turret roof. In that year also the skylight over the main stairs leaked badly and caused quite a lot of damage. From then on it constantly gave trouble.

In 1986 there were problems with the roof over the NW wing, and in 1987 there is the first mention of repairs to the turret gallery skylight. The condition of this skylight rapidly deteriorated until by 1989 it reached the stage where one corner had dropped by several inches and was being held up by a wooden prop from the floor. The internal drain pipes at either end of a main beam were leaking and the beam had rotted. From then on it and the turret roof got worse and worse and required constant attention. During the great storm of 1990 the five lime trees opposite the front door were blown down and there was a lot of damage to roofs. The trees had been a feature of Braziers and were greatly missed. Another pinnacle on the turret became dangerous so was removed, leaving only two. Part of the skylight over the main stairs fell in. The insurance claim totalled £2,652.

In view of the alarming deterioration of the roof, particularly over the turret and in the gully above room 20, the COM decided in 1991 to have a professional survey carried out. This was done by Mr. Stafford Taylor of Building Surveying Associates of Oxford for a fee of £5,082. He recommended a ten year programme of repairs at a total cost of nearly a quarter of a million pounds, i.e.: some £25,000 a year. The COM accepted the report in principle and asked BSA to proceed with the first year's work, which involved the turret and turret gallery. When the time came for the work to proceed, in 1992, it coincided with the work on the Fire Precautions and involved the same contractor, Latimer Contracting. So it was agreed that the architect supervising the Fire Precautions contract, Mr. Bone of BBW Partnership, would also supervise the roof contract. Special dispensation was obtained from the South Oxfordshire District Council to start the work before formal permission had been received as the leaks over the turret were so bad that we could not replace the buckets fast enough when there was a thunderstorm. Once the roof was opened up a horrifying situation was revealed. The walls supporting the skylight were found to be too weak to take the weight; no wonder it had dropped! The main beams supporting the roof over the turret room had rotted at the ends to such an extent that the resulting powder could be scraped out of the stonework with a spoon. The beams were renewed in the nick of time; not many more years and a heavy snowfall might have brought down the whole roof.

In 1993 the gully over room 1 was found to be leaking and repairs cost over £4,000. In 1995 work started on planning the second phase of the roof repairs. The local Conservation Officer recommended that Listed Building Consent be obtained for the roof as a whole to avoid having to do it for each phase. This was done. The work itself, which mainly involved the SW wing, but also included the roof outside the scullery door, was again undertaken by Latimers and was completed in 1996 at a total cost of £49,660, of which £17,866 was provided by donations. As BSA had by now gone out of business the work was supervised by Mr. Yabsley of BBW Partnership. When the roof was opened up death watch beetle was found in the roof beams over rooms 3,4 & 5; the ends of the beams were rotten and the roof was in danger of collapse. The ceilings had to be taken down and many beams had to be stripped out and replaced. Discussion soon started about phase three, which mainly dealt with the NW wing, but also covered repairs to most of the rest of the main roof, leaving only the SE wing and the Loggia still to do. Phase three was completed by Latimers in 1997 at a cost of £25,856, of which £18,648 was provided by donations. The work was again supervised by Mr. Yabsley.

Water Supply

In 1972 there is the first mention of a basin being installed in a visitor's room. Gradually, over the next 15 years, these were installed in nearly all rooms. In 1974, there is the first mention of replacing lead pipes. In 1983 some defective lead pipes in the courtyard were renewed in plastic. This resulted in an improvement in the plumbing so a general policy of replacing lead pipes by plastic was agreed. In 1992, during the work on the fire precautions, the plumber reported that the main water tanks were thin and had a life of only a few months. The opportunity was therefore taken to replace the old metal tanks with modern plastic ones. The work was done by R A Lock of Bicester at a cost of £7,828.

Water Softener

Because the local water is very hard the hot water is softened to minimise the build-up of scale. Occasionally the water softener has given trouble. In 1962, for instance, there is a report of it leaking badly, and in 1963 it froze up during a great frost. In 1985 the Professor of Chemistry at Reading University was asked whether the chemicals were safe. He reported that they would have an adverse effect on drinking water, so the decision was taken to confine water softening to the hot water only. In 1986 a new water softener was installed, space being made for it in the tank room by removing a redundant tank. The pipes to the laundry were re-routed so as to provide treated water.

Drainage

The minutes of the ESC for 1952 record an extract from an Agreement made with Joseph Richards, Butchers, Ltd., 91-93 Charterhouse Street, Smithfield, giving the owners and occupiers of Braziers Park "the right to the Sewage Works from Braziers Park now situate on Enclosure Ordinance N.318 with full right of entry....for the purpose of maintaining repairing renewing and emptying the said Works or any part thereof and all other rights necessary for the full enjoyment of the said Works".

In 1960 there is the first mention in the minutes of blocked drains. This became a recurring problem, and still is. In 1987 the main drain from the house to the septic tank became blocked because one section of pipe had moved out of alignment. This was located by sending a television camera down the drain. The cost of repair was £415. We still have the video. In 1994 one of the drains running under the terrace was relocated as it regularly became blocked. Then in 1998, after several serious blockages, a large stone was found in the drain outside the front of the house.

The Boiler

I have no precise evidence of when the central heating system was installed, but I believe the Flemings did it in the first decade of this century. In 1949 the report by Grant, Ware & Nelson said that the two boilers were completely defective and would have to be renewed. A new Beeston "Robin Hood" No. 7 F.N. coke fired boiler was therefore installed in 1950 by Callas Sons & May Ltd. of Reading at a cost of £265.

Coke is an efficient fuel but creates clinker and requires skilled attention. I am told that the community did not particularly like it. For reasons of economy it was only lit when there were visitors and only then when the weather was very cold. But this was normal in the 1950s. There was a separate smaller coke-fired boiler for hot water, known for obvious reasons as "Maid Marian". This boiler was later removed in 1979 after experiments had been made to see if it would bum wood. In 1966, after mains electricity had arrived, the Robin Hood boiler was converted to oil firing. This was done by Hassell of Newbury at a cost of £271. It was still only switched on when there were visitors and I found an interesting minute detailing which days baths were allowed. A new pump was fitted in 1970. In 1981 a wood fired boiler was installed to replace Maid Marian beside the oil fired boiler, for use in an emergency. This proved invaluable during power cuts, but as it needs topping up with wood every two hours, it is very labour intensive. A new oil tank was required in 1987, and again in 1996 at a cost of £457. A new burner

was fitted by Hassells in 1989 at a cost of £1,553. It failed in 1993 and was replaced at a cost of £823.

During an inspection by the Health and Safety Inspector in 1989, it was found that the boiler lagging was made of asbestos. This had to be removed by a specialist firm (City Insulation Contractors Ltd.) and replaced by a less dangerous substance. The whole boiler house had to be sealed off with plastic sheets while the work was done. The cost was £2,990. Hot water is provided via a calorifier in the drying cellar and in 1982 this tank was replaced.

Central Heating

In 1979 wood burning stoves were installed in various public rooms. In 1981 many of the pipes near the boiler were found to be partially blocked by scale and these were replaced. It was realised that the amount of scale was related to the water temperature so this was carefully regulated. The importance of softening the water was also emphasised.

In 1983 an investigation was made into the possible use of solar panels. It was reckoned that 40% of the hot water requirements could be met, but the system would have cost nearly £6,000 to install. Furthermore the Committee received a recommendation not to install the system as it would have provided hot water at the wrong time, i.e.: in hot weather, and the heat could not be stored. No further action was taken. In 1988 the central heating was extended by Hassells to rooms 4, 5 & 6 at a cost of £1224.

Electricity

According to "Braziers before the Community", electricity was installed by the Flemings in about 1905. An engine house was built to house the engine and generator. In 1950 the engine was a Lister single cylinder diesel engine which Grant, Ware & Nelson refer to as "modern". It is still on the premises. The generator was made by Newtons Ltd., and was rated at 50 volts 50 amps, i.e. 2,500 Watts, enough for about sixty 40 watt bulbs. The switchboard, a magnificent piece of Edwardian engineering, was installed by Callas, Sons & May Ltd. of Reading, and is still preserved. In the early days of the community I understand that the engine was only started when there were visitors, and even then it was turned off at night. Little oil lamps were given out by Dorothy Glaister so that people could see their way to their bedrooms. We still have these lamps, which come in handy for ceremonial occasions.

Mains electricity from the grid came to Ipsden in the late 1950s, but at first Braziers could not afford it. In September 1957 the COM discussed a proposition

from Southern Electricity that power points be installed in the kitchen and for a projector. A transformer would be installed so that the 50 volt wiring could still be used for lighting. The whole was to cost £126 but a guaranteed consumption of £100 per year was required. In October the COM decided not to proceed, as they did not have the money and could not guarantee the annual consumption.

In 1959 the COM agreed to the installation of an electricity supply to the various cottages on the Braziers estate, but still had to guarantee a certain consumption. This installation was completed in 1960 and 1961: including Garden Cottage, the Bothy, and the cottages in Braziers Lane. Each had to be wired and, as was common in those days when a house was wired for the first time, only the minimum number of lights and power points were installed.

In 1962 the Southern Electricity Board was asked for an estimate for one PowerPoint in each bedroom and four others in the house. These were for electric fires, so that visitors could have some heating. The following year the Treasurer reported an increase in the attendance which he attributed to the fact that the bedrooms were heated. Donations had paid for this.

At Christmas 1962 the engine broke down due to lack of lubrication, causing great distress to those community members who regarded themselves responsible. In 1963 the main building was wired at 240 volts for power points only, only one in each room and a few in the public rooms. Finances, however, still did not permit the lights to be rewired, so instead a transformer was installed to reduce the voltage to 50 volts and the original wiring continued to be used. However, as the capacity was now much more than the original 2,500 watts, more lights and circuits were added over the years. The possibility of off peak heating was investigated but found to be too expensive. The supply now comes from two phases but the records do not show whether this was the case from the start or whether the second phase was a later edition. The result is, however, that there is 415 volts at the main distribution board in the larder. This is deadly, so anyone who does not understand what it means should not be allowed to work at the board.

In 1966 a comparison was made of the cost of heating the library, the courtyard room (at that time still being used as a pottery) and the laundry by off peak storage heaters or by oil fired heaters. Off peak heaters were decided on and were installed in the library, the study and the flatlet in 1967. Electric heaters were installed in the greenhouse. In 1985 the decision was taken to start installing storage heaters in visitors' bedrooms. The cost of doing them all at once was prohibitive, so the work was carried out over a number of years. The tariff agreed

for the off peak supply included a boost in the afternoon. Such a tariff is no longer available so the existing arrangement is carefully preserved.

Discussions started in 1984 about the possibility of rewiring the whole building. Professional reports were obtained and a plan was drawn up to do the work in stages, starting with the outbuildings. Eventually the old 50 volt wiring deteriorated to such an extent that it was becoming dangerous. Several circuits were inoperative. In January 1987 Wheelers of Cholsey advised that the entire premises should be rewired. They were asked to carry out a survey, which was eventually received in December 1987.

They recommended that the main house be rewired in stages, starting at the top floor and working downwards. The first stage, the top floor and the meters in the larder, cost £3,987 and was done in 1988. Not a moment too soon; the Factory Inspector commented when he saw the work being done that, had we not started, he would have closed us down. The lighting circuits are separate from the power circuits and have 2 amp sockets. Mirror lights with shaver sockets were installed. Only one main circuit breaker was installed, serving both phases. So if there is any problem the whole house loses electricity.

The second phase, the first floor and half-way house was done in 1989 at a cost of £9,763. As a consequence of the increase to 240 volts, all the bedside lamps in the house had to be checked and brought up to the required standard. As part of the rewiring scheme, lights were placed above all the basins in the bedrooms. These incorporated shaver sockets and the Health and Safety Officer complained that they were not to the appropriate standard. This statement was vehemently opposed by the contractor, who won! Finally, the ground floor and basements were converted in 1990 at a cost of over £13,800. In 1993 the supply to the Art Studio and Apple Store was renewed and improved at a cost of £1,535.

In 1994 the main transformer was struck by lightning and had to be replaced. In 1995 one of the main fuses blew. Subsequent investigation showed that the whole system was at the limit of its capacity. The cost of increasing the capacity was estimated at more than £20,000. Nothing was done as it was realised that, if the central heating system were renewed, there would be no need for storage heaters and the situation would be relieved.

Fire Precautions

One of the first acts of the community in 1950 was to obtain a report from the Fire Brigade. It seems they required little to be done and for many years

thereafter the relations with the Fire Brigade were good: regular reports were obtained and acted upon, and regular donations were made to the local Benevolent Fund. Fire extinguishers were installed and from time to time there is mention of additional ones being obtained and the existing ones modernised.

Then, following an inspection by the Fire Service in 1967, a detailed report was received calling for fire screens (much like the present ones), several fire doors (though not to every room), floor hatches and escape ladders from the second floor and turret, the opening above the hall to be filled in with fire-resistant glazing, a fire alarm system (but with break glass type operation - not smoke alarms), an emergency lighting system, fire hoses and fire extinguishers. This report was questioned, particularly as to what level of fire prevention we were legally bound to provide, and as to the advisability of having escape routes over roofs. The Chief Fire Officer replied that persons should not have to scramble over roofs but put the matter of the legal position to the Henley Rural District Council, suggesting that we should suspend consideration on all aspects of the means of escape arrangements until he had heard from them. Nothing more was heard so nothing was done. 23 years later this had unfortunate repercussions.

It was however decided to install hose reels on the first and second floors. These were installed by 1972. There were no fire escapes, but there was an escape hatch from the turret room to the roof, it being accepted in those days that the Fire Brigade would rescue people who had made their way on to the roof. In 1974 an inspection was carried out by Chubb Fire and they recommended that three new escape harnesses be installed in rooms 14, 15 & 17 on the top floor to replace the Davey equipment already installed; at that time this type of escape device was acceptable. The work was completed in 1975. There was also a rope ladder type device installed in room 3 but tests by the Fire Service in 1990 showed that it did not reach the ground!

On 5 Oct 1974 the hay in the Dutch barn was set alight by three children. The Fire Brigade arrived promptly but two fire hydrants failed to work and the barn was gutted. The fire hydrants were soon replaced.

In June 1990 disaster struck. We were reported to the authorities. This resulted in several visits from different types of inspector, most of whom regarded the affair as something of a joke. But the Fire Officer condemned the building. He ordered that the Turret Room must no longer be slept in and that the TV room in the cellar was not to be used. He referred the matter to his boss and the next day returned with the Divisional Officer. He was most annoyed because, as he kept saying, his

order of some 16 years standing to build a fireproof partition at the top of the main stairs had not been complied with. I have not been able to find this order - the only one I have is the one made 23years earlier, mentioned above. He made a thorough inspection, taking exception to almost everything he saw, and said he would prepare a full report. With hindsight, in my opinion, we should have not been so cowed as we were and we should have faced up to him, but there was real fear that we might be forced to close down, or at least only be allowed to run day courses.

There then arose the problem of which Regulations applied. The matter was put to the Environmental Health Officer, who visited us the next week and ruled that we were a "House in Multiple Occupation", which meant that a Fire Certificate was not required and the rules were therefore slightly more relaxed, a great relief.

A few days later we were visited by the Conservation Officer because we are a listed building. He was most helpful and advised us to get in touch with English Heritage, who had to be involved because of the II* listing of the building. Another visitor was the Building Control Officer at the SODC, because the work required Planning Permission.

A few weeks later the report arrived. We were required to install a fire alarm system, emergency lights, partitions on the first floor and around the turret gallery, two fire escapes, fire doors, and to lift all the floorboards on the first and second floors and insert fireproof material. The escape apparatus which had been installed some years previously was by now illegal and was to be removed. The very fine linen cupboard on the first floor had to be removed as it was in a fire escape route. The first rough guess at the cost was £75,000, a sum totally beyond our means.

Next we had the problem of finding an architect to supervise the work. We needed one with a thorough knowledge of the Fire Regulations. It so happened that one of our members had had dealings with a local building firm, Latimer Contracting of Thame, so we asked them for a recommendation. They put us on to BBW Partners in Marlow. One of their architects, Alan Bone, specialised in fire precautions so we could not have done better. When he saw the report he estimated the cost would be more like £150,000. Contrary to our own opinion, both he and English Heritage thought the requirements were lenient. At the time, there were no drawings of the buildings so he had to start from scratch and make drawings. These have proved useful ever since.

As there was nowhere near enough money available, the COM decided to launch an appeal and to sell Braziers Cottage, High Cottage and the Bungalow Site. The Rules Require that any sale be approved by the Members at a General Meeting so a Special General Meeting was held in March 1991 and the sales approved. The sales were finalised in 1991, the arrangements being made by Warmingshams of Goring. The total raised by the sales was £291,250, from which £30,000 had to be paid to buy out the occupants of Braziers Cottage. The appeal itself raised £50,000, a remarkable achievement.

Because the building was listed grade II* we had to get approval for any alterations not only from the local Conservation Officer, but also from English Heritage. The architect presented his plans to them in February 1991 but the negotiations dragged on for several more months.

One of the major problems was that the Flemings had rebuilt the house on the open plan principle, with a hole through from the ground to the first floor. This was a distinctive feature giving character to the building, but it led to a loss of heat from the inner hall, and was an obvious fire risk as it would act as a chimney. It had been filled in with plastic in 1974, to the great relief of the residents, but of course this was highly inflammable. The Fire Officer ruled that glass would be acceptable provided it had a resistance time of one hour. Unfortunately, even after considerable investigation and an approach to the Government's Fire Research Station, it was not possible to find any glass which would provide that degree of protection when horizontal. Many plans were put forward to avoid having to fill in the hole, and indeed to avoid having fire screens. The most promising was put forward by a consultant called in by English Heritage. The idea was to have stairs in room 2 leading to a door to the corridor opposite room 5, and a door from room 1 leading to the corridor opposite room 13. It would have meant that room 2 could not be used as a bedroom but the community were willing to accept the plan.

The local Fire Officer accepted it, but the Senior Fire Officer refused permission. The COM requested our solicitor to make a last request to English Heritage but they replied that could not overturn the decision of the Fire Service. So the hole had to be filled in, an act which destroyed the character of the building and caused great distress to the community. The whole purpose of listing buildings is to prevent their character being destroyed, and English Heritage is there to enforce this. They failed. When it comes to Fire Precautions the Fire Service is more powerful.

English Heritage were concerned about the requirement to lift all the floorboards, in view of the potential damage, but they could not get the Fire Service to relax this ruling. English Heritage insisted that the fire screens on the first floor had to have plain glass, not wired glass (which would have satisfied the Fire Service). The special glass comes from Germany and is very expensive, but becomes opaque if there is fire on one side, thus preventing the heat getting through and causing the fire to spread to the other side. To install the screen at the south end of the landing the two stairways had to be moved forward. This meant that the door to what is now the ironing room had to be moved round the corner.

On the ground floor the back corridor became an escape route. This would have meant that the sink could not be used. The problem was solved by creating a new room around the sink, opening up a store to become a corridor, and moving the door of the then TV room into the study corridor. On the second floor several partitions were erected and the door to room 17 had to be moved. The turret gallery was walled off. A new corridor was made through the tank room leading to a fire escape, and the bathroom was remodelled.

There were several problems getting the fire escapes to fit in: the top bathroom and tank room had to be reconstructed and all the drains in the courtyard had to be moved. The Listed Building Consent for the Fire Precautions specified that the fire escapes be painted black. However, galvanised escapes were installed, which do not need painting. In 1995 the Conservation Officer noticed this and said we could not just ignore the requirement, but would have to get permission not to paint the fire escapes. So we wrote and asked, only to be told that there was no provision in the regulations for a requirement to be waived, and recommended that we apply for Listed Building Consent not to paint the fire escapes. So we went through the whole complicated procedure, and in due course obtained the necessary consent.

Another distressing feature of the whole episode was that the various bodies concerned (the Fire Service, English Heritage, the local Conservation Officer et al) discussed the plans for the building without consulting the members of the community. It was only after I offered to take minutes at one of their meetings that I was able to join in and influence what was being decided.

Partly because it could be done in advance, and partly to show the local authority that we wished to be co-operative, the COM agreed to proceed with the fire alarm and emergency lighting systems. These were done by Wheelers and were completed in 1991 at a total cost of £40,593. The emergency lighting has proved most useful, particularly during power cuts (which Braziers suffers from

regularly). The fire alarm system is a nuisance as it suffers from false alarms. All alarm systems do, but Braziers seems to get more than its fair share. When the system was first installed, the smoke alarms were too sensitive and there were some 30 alarms during the first week.

Work on the fire precautions in the house started in 1992 and went on for the best part of 1993. There was considerable interruption to the life of the community and the dust and mess were very trying. However the contractor, Latimers, did their best to minimise the discomfort. The work was finally completed and accepted by the Fire Officer in March 1994. The overall final cost was £313,512. Had we known how much it would cost before we began we would probably have lost heart and Braziers would have closed down.

In 1993 both the fire hydrants in the grounds were found to be inoperative and were repaired. A major and persistent complaint is the fire doors. These had to have a half-hour resistance and the Conservation Officer would not permit new doors. Consequently a fireproof panel had to be fixed to the back of each door. This is very heavy and makes the door unwieldy. Another effect of the fire screens and fire doors is that the heating pattern of the house has been upset. Some parts are now hotter while others are colder. This resulted in a major crack to the plaster in the main stair well. Furthermore, the flow of air in the main cellar was interrupted, so it is now liable to damp. In an endeavour to improve the air flow, agreement was reached with the Fire Officer to fit magnetic catches on six doors so that they may normally be open and this was done in 1995 at a cost of £1,078.

The COM seriously considered rejecting the final certificate in view of all these problems but decided against it. In 1999, five years after the work was completed, we asked the Fire Service to make an inspection. All they found was that the Emergency Exit notices required replacing by the new European standard, and that many of the fire doors needed repair.

EPILOGUE

Over the last ten years the expenditure on repairs and new work at Braziers has averaged some £60,000 a year, though this includes the exceptional case of the fire precautions. Even without this, the average is nearly £30,000 a year.

As I am an engineer I have a feeling for machinery, buildings etc. To me, railway engines, motor cars, computers, buildings etc. have a personality: a life of their own. Braziers is a beautiful, gracious old building, a friendly building. But it had

not been looked after in a friendly way since before the War. It had become run down. Most people would say that there was no money, and this is true of course. But I would say that it is because the building had not been thought of as a member of the community. The community would not have treated its living members with the same disregard. However I am pleased to end by saying that this is changing. In the last few years a lot has been done and the buildings are now looking healthier than they did for many years.

May this continue.

Reassessing Braziers Vision

John Woodcock

This talk was given at a day seminar on "The New Universe Story" at Braziers on 27th March 1999. John Woodcock, a former Chairman of Braziers, gave the 1996 Glaister Lecture entitled "Norman Glaister and Multimentality", published in Research Communications 16.

For Braziers the New Universe Story and the practical meaning Norman Glaister gave it, are like a treasure that has been lost and is waiting to be found. There are many folk tales on this theme and one that seems to me to fit our situation is that of the Pedlar of Swaffham. The story runs thus:

"Once upon a time there was a pedlar who lived at Swaffham in Norfolk. One night this pedlar had a dream, in which he was told that if he went to London and stood on London Bridge he would hear something greatly to his advantage. So the pedlar decided to leave home and make the long journey to London. When at last he got there, he stood on London Bridge and waited. He waited all day but nothing happened. As night fell he decided he had had enough. It was only a dream, after all, and he had been foolish to listen to it. He would find a lodging house and set off for home in the morning. He approached a bystander. "Where are you from?" asked the man. When the pedlar told him, the man said, "How strange. Last night I had a dream about a man in Swaffham. This man was digging in his garden and he found a great treasure buried under an apple tree..." On hearing this the pedlar turned on his heel and set off at once for home. When he got there, without more ado he took a spade and began to dig under the apple tree. Sure enough, his spade unearthed a large quantity of ancient gold coins, stacked in a jar. This story has a particularly happy ending, because the pedlar decided to put this treasure to good use. With it he was able to restore the church in Swaffham, so that once again it could proclaim its message to the people all around..."

Braziers' treasure is the New Universe Story, with its message for the future uniquely interpreted by Norman Glaister fifty years ago. Norman Glaister bought Braziers in 1950 as a platform from which to proclaim the New Universe Story and as a place at which to collect the material for its next chapter by conducting living research. He claimed that humanity must consciously take responsibility for

identifying the narrative story explicit in the history of the universe, in order to comply with it. Treasure indeed, but, not surprisingly, most of Glaister's early - and subsequent - supporters, even in his own lifetime, preferred to bury this dangerous treasure and to divert his initiative into the safer channel of more traditional adult education.

Now others are unearthing the treasure all around us, and Braziers is challenged to return to Norman Glaister's founding purposes which give meaning to the sociological group practices Braziers still retains. However, in my view Glaister's founding purposes still seem to be ahead of the game, and this adds importance to Braziers' contribution towards the next chapter which is still to be written.

There are three headings under which I will be considering this contribution. First, the features of Glaister's proposals which make them unique; secondly, the authenticity of his proposals for our own day and age; and lastly the present prospects for their realisation at Braziers and elsewhere.

Glaister's Unique Interpretation

In 1946 Norman Glaister met the physicist Lancelot Law Whyte, author of the book "The Next Development in Man". Whyte was among those who, early on, recognised that the whole cosmos at every level is in process of evolution. Evolution, in other words, is not an exclusively biological event on planet Earth, but proceeds in structurally defined and interdependent stages of complex organisation from the so-called Big Bang onwards. And, from this, Glaister, unlike L.L. Whyte and others, concluded that further stages were to be expected. This was his main interest in founding Braziers, as an experiment "to pave the way" for new developments in humanity's participation in the next stage in the process.

Recently Whyte's and Glaister's view of evolution has been confirmed by science. Rupert Sheldrake writes as follows:

"We inherit a dual vision of the world from 19th century science. On the one hand, a great evolutionary process on earth, and on the other hand the physical eternity of a mechanistic universe. Life evolves but fundamental physical reality does not. This double world view has become deeply habitual, and static models of a physical eternity remained orthodox until the 1960's. What is just now emerging in its place is an evolutionary view of reality at every organisational level: subatomic, chemical, biological and social, or, in one word, cosmic. The universe is in a unitary process of growth".

However, even though the dual vision of the world may no longer be scientifically orthodox, it still widespread. Glaister's unitary vision is one part of Braziers' treasure still waiting to be found. The second part of the treasure is the implication for humanity of the processes by which one evolutionary stage is transformed into the next. This happens when the existing forms of a stage combine to become parts of a novel more complex stage.

Glaister, a doctor who had of course studied biology, was particularly interested in the lessons humanity might learn from the example of the creation of multicellular organisms (plants, animals etc) through the combination of diverse cells. He surmised that one trigger for this cellular metamorphosis was the inner conflict experienced by cells in meeting the contradictory demands of nutrition and stability. A soft enclosing membrane suited to the ingestion of food was vulnerable to destruction. A hard enclosing membrane suited to survival was inimical to nutrition. The evolutionary solution was the union of the diverse parts so that each might safely specialise, to their mutual benefit, in the relative security of the new multicellular organism. And so it happened. From this evolutionary example, Glaister surmised that much human conflict flowed from the intrinsic and potentially useful specialisation of conservative (hard) and radical (soft) types of personality. Society was instinctively balanced in favour of conservatism and was therefore at risk when circumstances required change. This thinking followed that of Wilfred Trotter, an eminent surgeon with sociological interests, whom Glaister had known personally. Trotter divided humans in society into the two types of "resistive" (the conservative majority which maintain the status quo) and "sensitive" (the radical minority open to change). These two types are nearly always in conflict and need to learn to collaborate. Glaister, remembering the example of the cells, suggested that, in order to improve its efficacy, each human organisation should adopt a form of governance which balanced the needs of maintenance and of development. His two-committee system - executive and sensory - was introduced into Braziers from its very beginning. The willingness of the two traditionally opposed groups to work together was assumed, in consequence of their supposed common allegiance to the idea that they were agents of the evolutionary process. Unfortunately, the evolutionary framework from which the integrative organisation should have received its impetus to develop was sidelined at an early stage in Braziers' history. It is, as already suggested, Braziers' hidden treasure, for lack of which a heavy price has been paid.

There is a further treasure yet more deeply buried. Acknowledging that evolution has proceeded towards the growth of human consciousness, Glaister suggested

that the next stage of cosmic development will involve humans coming together, in order to bring about the birth of a greater consciousness, in conscious group souls, based on new forms of self-conscious unity and diversity. These future groups he called "multimental organisms" or multimentality. Today the individual soul is seen as the ultimate human achievement in the evolutionary process, but, for the solution of the problems generated by self-conscious individuals, more complex integrated social entities, recognising themselves as agents of evolution, now do seem to be urgently needed, just as Glaister predicted. I believe that soon they will be seen to be emerging all around us, and I hope that Braziers will be one of them.

The Authenticity of Glaister's Interpretation of the New Universe Story

When advocating the New Universe Story not only as a source of common meaning but as a guide to human action, it is clearly important to check the current authenticity of these claims. What are the organising principles underlying the New Universe Story? A new science of complexity has come into being to discover and understand complex systems, and a nerve centre for this work is the Santa Fe Institute in New Mexico, founded in 1984. One of the studies at Santa Fe has been into the origins of order at all levels in evolution. Whereas biologists have hitherto viewed order as something that builds up through time as a result of chance and natural selection, Santa Fe is saying that self-organisation is an intrinsic property of living systems. Natural selection is held to act on the products of self-organisation, but not to cause it. Moreover the forces that drive complex systems, their response to outside factors and the methods by which they evolve, are often the same at all stages of evolution. The successive interdependent stages in which the universe develops are found to generate a narrative form - a veritable creation story. The sad indifference shown by many scientists to the discovery of the cosmic narrative is, I think, clearly put by Arthur Peacocke in his 1978 Bampton Lecture, when he said: "The hierarchy of natural systems has been frequently described and needs no further elaboration, especially as it is not in dispute amongst scientists".

This may be so, but Glaister's predictions about the human future, derived from the hierarchical nature of cosmic evolution, depend on a further "elaboration". The verification of Glaister's prediction must come mainly from humanity's experimenting upon itself, if conscious group souls are to be the next development in the cosmic series. It has to be said that, although Glaister's views about cosmic evolution in general have been substantially confirmed - for example by Lee Smolin in his book "The Life of the Cosmos" (1997), this is not the case with his "elaborations", that is, his view of the next stage in the

hierarchy. However, there are straws in the wind that should be noted. The first straw comes from the eminent Jungian James Hillman, who has spent his long professional life helping people cultivate the individual soul. However, his recent book, " We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and Things are Getting Worse" (Hillman and Ventura,1993), records his misgivings about this approach to the human condition. He suggests that the soul is more like a group phenomenon than an individual one. A second straw is the immense popularity in the USA both of Dr Maurice Scott Peck's books about community and of his short-term seminars demonstrating how to raise the quality of community experience. Dr Scott Peck was sufficiently impressed by the recurring success of his procedures, in generating a collective sense of honesty and wellbeing, that he permitted himself to speculate that this success may have been due to an archetypal propensity for the formation of a group soul, when the combination of unity and diversity in its members was sufficiently well developed.

It is also helpful that Dr Scott Peck distinguishes between the attitudes and procedures appropriate, on the one hand, for doing the executive tasks of an organisation, and, on the other, to achieving openness and collaboration in the community - "task" and "process". He goes further and notes the improvement in the execution of executive tasks immediately following the experience of the process of community building. This confirms the benefits of Glaister's prescription for separating the governance of social organisations into the two complementary divisions, which he termed "executive" and "sensory".

It is in the matter of this dual governance that the most interesting research for our purposes comes from the Santa Fe Institute. Their work on the new science of complexity has shown that a network's ability to co-ordinate complex activities throughout the network is greatest at the transition between its ordered and its chaotic states. It takes little imagination to recognise that, in Glaister's system of dual governance, the ordered state relates to the maintenance of executive function, while the chaotic state relates to the development process devising the changes needed to survive in a changing environment. Thus the introduction of a permanent and authoritative development function (sensory) is necessary if the organisation or network is to be held at the edge of chaos, that is to say, ready and able to risk the chaos resulting from necessary developments. It is very satisfactory that the latest work being done on complex systems at Santa Fe should confirm the practical organisational innovation proposed by Glaister from his own study of evolution.

Developments since Glaister's Time and the Current Situation

Despite the increasing evidence that the universe is an ordered whole in process of development, through the continuing complexification of its parts, in general little effort so far has been made to apply the principles of complexification to the organisation of human societies. Norman Glaister's experiment in social complexification at Braziers is still unique, and even at Braziers it remains unconnected to the New Universe Story. Whether Braziers - together with everyone else - can survive for long in an increasingly chaotic world without making this connection remains to be seen.

Three developments of Sensory/Executive at Braziers need to be noted. At the founding of Braziers Glaister had in mind a college with a new form of differentiated group leadership inspired by his evolutionary vision. This new form of leadership was meant to balance the traditional conflict between social stability and change, avoiding both rigidity on the one hand and chaos on the other. However, Glaister's supporters were not inspired by the evolutionary role intended for them. Fifty years ago the New Universe Story was not scientifically orthodox in the way it is today. Many of Glaister's supporters fell away, and the loyal remnant were too few to make possible two committees with separate personnel. This situation had an unintended advantage. The two committees had to be defined by their respective tasks, rather than by the supposed personalities of their members. In spite - or because of - this, Sensory/Executive has continued throughout Braziers' lifetime and some people give it much of the credit for the survival of a somewhat unlikely organisation.

A second change has been attempted. Traditionally, the whole membership of an organisation votes for its executive leaders. This happens at Braziers, but there are no traditions anywhere for appointing a sensory committee. In consequence, Braziers' Sensory Committee has always been a closed, self-appointing in-group, and this has been a serious weakness. Norman Glaister died in 1961. In 1968 efforts were made to widen involvement in the radical (sensory) work of Braziers, on the principle that all participants in Braziers' work of whatever kind, were entitled to a "say". A "sensory network" of three small groups was set up and continued, with various changes in its procedures, for about twenty-five years, until lethargy finally overcame it in the early 1990s. In retrospect it seems that this decline stemmed from the Network's lack of any connection with the main Sensory Committee which dealt with matters of importance. A lack of formal communication channels isolated the Network from the main body. Today the Network is being reintroduced and it may be hoped that a satisfactory relationship to the central sensory process will be established. Braziers' fifty-year-old experiment in improving the quality and quantity of the internal communication

of a group could perhaps indicate how collective, and ultimately planetary, consciousness may eventually be achieved.

There has been a third, more recent, development of sensory at Braziers. We have recognised that the rational nature of our traditional Sensory Committee meetings may inhibit the sharing of deeper feelings. Regular so-called "Feelings" sensory meetings have been added to Braziers' internal communication structure. The inclusion of such meetings has been helped by the immense popularity of the theory and practices of the American psychiatrist Dr Scott Peck, mentioned above, who experimented with enhancing short-term personal relationships through the sharing of feelings.

Glaister's work has been seriously complicated because he set it up in an attractive country mansion requiring continuous expensive maintenance. However, a new school of thought may actually benefit from being identified with an attractive location, so long as loyalty to the location does not replace the loyalty owing to the thought. As I have suggested, the seminal evolutionary ideas behind the various Braziers' practices have been buried for nearly fifty years. It remains to be seen whether a renaissance in Braziers' commitment to the creative process is possible through celebrating the New Universe Story in our affairs. This is perhaps more likely now that the story is at last becoming the subject of so much scientific interest. However, Braziers' practice of deliberately cultivating the rational interplay of the opposites of radicalism and conservatism, sensitive and resistive(or, as we now say, sensory and executive), may not be enough for our purposes. What may be needed in addition is to engage people's imaginations, through the senses and the body, in the creativity of the universe story. As Thomas Berry reminds us "Our entrancement with the new context of existence is necessary if the human community is to generate the psychic energy needed for the renewal of the Earth". I agree with him.

A History of the Land at Braziers

Sarah Wood

Sarah Wood is a landscape gardener who lives with her family at Braziers. This article is part of her Master's Degree thesis from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Natural History

"Braziers Park occupies some 12ha (30 acres) of undulating land...in the southern Chiltern hills. ...Altitude lies between about 80-100m (225-280 ft) OD. The underlying solid geology is Upper and Middle Chalk of the Upper Cretaceous, but as it typical of these higher Chiltern slopes, superficial deposits such as the calcareous Coombe Rock and the more acid Clay-with-Flints also occur". Thus the botanist Dr Chris Smith in his report on Braziers Farm. He also notes that the area tends towards drought, and "the combination of the rolling topography with free drainage leads to a tendency for frost pockets to form in the hollows".

As far as archaeology is concerned, there is a Roman well at nearby Ipsden, and strip lynchets at neighbouring Bottom Farm, so clearly there is evidence of early habitation. The well-known Iron Age sites of Dorchester and the Roman and early British hills of Wittenham Clumps lie to the south actually overlooking the Thames. Dr Smith considered that "some at least of the Park's woodland strips almost certainly have links with the ancient stands of the Chiltern Plateau". This is further indicated by the presence of the grass Wood Mellick (*Melica uniflora*), and Spurge Laurel (*Daphne laureola*), both typical of a long continuity of woodland. These are abundant on the Woodland Walk, which is already marked as such on the title map of 1841.

The land is mainly used for grazing, containing fragments of species-rich chalk grassland, with "cowslip, yarrow, rough hawkbit, smooth hawksbeard,... birdsfoot trefoil and sorrel", and, on the old tennis court, now growing some fine young oak trees, "golden oat and sweet vernal grasses, field woodrush ("Good Friday grass"), agrimony, red clover, hedge and lady's bedstraw, common cats ear and lesser knapweed". The hedgerows along the lane are also species-rich, with field maple, hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, dogrose, alder buckthorn, and, a little further up, spindle bushes with their shocking pink and orange berries.

The first date we have for Braziers is engraved on a stone in the cellar: 1688. We don't know much about the land, but the house built at that time was a substantial

farmhouse: still only a farmhouse. It may have belonged to William Blackall, a local farmer who also owned the neighbouring Bottom Farm. In 1763 Braziers Farm is detailed by Ann Blackall, William's daughter, in "a short account of my land belonging to Braziers Farme". There are 187 acres of land, in sixteen fields, including outbuildings and an orchard. This may have been the present orchard which is in a frost pocket, but is more likely to have been one further up the hill, as shown on the 1841 tithe map. This simply shows one large field in place of the present orchard. Garden Field and Cowsheds. Ann Blackall, who became Ann Massingberd, didn't live at Braziers. Until her death in 1785, the house and land were mostly rented out. In 1769 the lease included stables, a brewhouse (probably the present laundry building), a 'court garden' and two closes of arable land. Already the farm was leased out, together with other farms owned by the family. When she died in 1785, Braziers was sold, and bought by Admiral Manley.

Strawberry Hill Gothic

Manley "bought Braziers and its associated land in order to set himself up as country squire...He commissioned Daniel Harris, an Oxford architect, to enlarge the house and remodel it in the new Regency style" (known as Strawberry Hill Gothic). "The roof line was castellated, and the newly fashionable pointed windows were introduced wherever possible, even to modifying the main windows in the older part of the house. The brick walls were plastered over". So now Braziers farmhouse was transformed miraculously into a fairy castle and "considered to be a stylistic triumph".

The new owner did not take to farming himself, or use a bailiff or steward to oversee the land; he continued to let out the farm: "Only the woodlands remained in Manley's name. These had always been reserved to the gentlemen of Braziers for shooting, and so continued until recent times". (Quotations from Clarence Cross: "Braziers before the Community", 1982).

Manley died in 1837, and his son John Shaw Manley chose not to live at Braziers. There were many different occupants until the end of the century - a high turnover - what was wrong with staying at Braziers? Had they made it too grand for itself? Was the land rejecting them? Not a very great punishment, a high turnover of people - we don't know what their lives were like here, of course. But then, this kind of hubris, enlarging and aggrandising your house, is so common, it can't be a very great sin.

Braziers in 1841

In 1841, as shown on the tithe map, the occupant was a Mrs. Grenfell. She had the house and grounds, very much similar in outline to nowadays, with the

exception of the large eastern fields of North and South Pigtrough, which are shown as one large field. The Woodland Walk is shown already, right around the property to the north, though the larger part of the woodland, above the present day North Garden and West Park, does not exist and West Park forms one large expanse with what is now Back Park.

The walled kitchen garden is not shown, nor the orchard - again, there is one larger field shown. The only known farm buildings are the granary and the bam, and there is a building on the site of the pottery. Presumably Mrs. Grenfell had a kitchen garden, but not much else - the rest of the land was perhaps used as a park.

Interestingly, there is a pond shown near the barn.

Of the other outbuildings: the Bothy is shown, as is Garden Cottage, but we know that Garden Cottage was until 40 years ago Stable Cottage, with a room to one side and rooms over; there is a building on the site of the Coach House, but it is not as large; there is a building in place of the present Apple Store, but larger.

We do not know much about the next 50 years - we know that the farm was rented out until the 1860's, and that the list of residents of the house was quite large. From Mrs. Grenfell in 1841, there was John Sivewright in 1846, Frederick Keats in 1851, Captain Augustus Albert Garland after this, and then in 1883 Alfred Charles Wells of Wallingford, who took the name of Arding, in order to inherit his uncle's money, and lived at Braziers until it was bought by Valentine Fleming in about 1906. None of them seems to have stayed for very many years at Braziers.

Braziers in 1898

By 1898, for which we have a large shooting map which unrolls from above the gun cupboard in the back corridor at Braziers, there are a few more outbuildings. Some buildings including the Pump House, and the pond in the bowling green, have disappeared. The farmyard complex has been filled in with a dairy (now the Egghouse) and the animal stalls that are there now. A path connects these with the back door of Garden Cottage. The badger baiting pit is shown (it is not there in 1841) and an unknown building connected with it just north. The kitchen garden now has its distinctive five-sided shape, though there is no orchard shown, and no cowshed. The pond has vanished, but there is a pump house in the copse and another mysterious building in what is now the Water Garden. We don't know who built these and for what, though we know that Mr. Arding built what is now the art studio, 'for the use of the local community'. Apparently his wife

taught Sunday school there to the village children. He also built the "Green Bungalow", known later as "Webb's Bungalow" and burned down in 1983, on Braziers Lane.

So why a dairy? Did they farm? Clive Aslett writes about country house owners in his book *The Last Country Houses: After 1890* "Agriculture was depressed and the life of the (country) house had to be financed by investments elsewhere...the estates were rarely much more than a thousand acres, and even then they were often bought for sport rather than farming". (Aslett 82 p4). Owners had two attitudes -one, with "what had become a rather old-fashioned attitude to land ownership as a means to social advance" wanted much the same as before but 'smarter and glossier'. "The other type of owner wanted a country house either because the country embodied a social order they saw disappearing...; or because they enjoyed the historical fantasy of living in a castle or a building that appeared to be Tudor...They were likely to own a farm because it expressed their romantic identification with the land as a way of life. In form, there was naturally some overlap between the houses which embodied these desires - few of the second sort of owner actually went without the benefits of modern technology,... but the purpose of the smart country house was principally social". (Aslett 1982, p8).

Valentine Fleming (M.P. for South Oxfordshire and the father of Peter and Ian Fleming)

In 1906 "we come to the family who made the most dramatic changes that Braziers had seen in over a century...it is obvious that Valentine Fleming intended to spare no expense in transforming Braziers Park into a gracious, modern country house. He already had a large area of rough shooting country; for the horses he built new stables" (with a motor car house on one side, with its own repairing pit) "for the basset hounds he built kennels beyond the community hall (on the site of the earlier building). He created a decorative water garden east of the house" (Cross, 1982 p13). The water garden is off angle. Fleming also built a terrace west of the house, "where he used the stone floor tiles discarded during modernisation of the kitchen". This looked out over the West Front, now a formal garden with lawns and yew walk. The yew walk, however, doesn't go anywhere.

The wall and Long Border enclosing the West front were built at the same time, and the Yew hedge planted along the drive. The Long Border doesn't go anywhere either. The house is framed on one side but not on the other. Did he just not get round to planting the rest of the yew hedge, on the other side of the house? Maybe by then he had lost interest.

There were also built "a garden house overlooking the terrace; and several tennis courts beyond the Woodland Walk". (Cross 1982, pl4). Did he build the pretty cowshed and pigsties, and the idyllic orchard in its frost pocket, with its trees and their wonderful names like "Newton Wonder", "Uvedale St Germain", "Early Alfred" painted on china labels? Surely his gardeners would have known that it wouldn't work? There was a Rose Walk, which led from the Water garden to the Greenhouse. It seems as if the farm buildings, much more elaborate and beautiful than usual or necessary, were all part of a game. At any rate part of the show, continuing the facade of a Gothic fairytale.

Despite these grandiose changes, the Flemings used Braziers for only a few years and mainly in summer; in 1911 it was sold to Sir Ernest Moon, who merely improved the drainage system and converted the kennels to an apple store. Lady Moon, who employed eight gardeners, lived at Braziers up until 1950, when it was bought by Norman Glaister, still with the layout of a Victorian estate.

Relationships between Norman Glaister's Ideas and Recent Concepts – Some Exploratory Thoughts

Penny Pitty

Penny Pitty was resident at Braziers from 1990 to 1992. She is a Geography graduate who works as a freelance environmental information consultant.

At the time when Norman Glaister was developing the ideas which led to the founding of Braziers Park, the scientific landscape was very different from that of today. Since then, new concepts, such as complexity theory, self-organising systems and the Gaia hypothesis have revolutionised our understanding of the evolution of the universe and of the universality of the forces which govern both natural phenomena and human society. This paper sets out to examine some of these concepts in relation to Glaister's ideas.

Use of language

Integrative

The use of the word 'integrative' as chosen for the title of Braziers (The Braziers Park School of Integrative Social Research) is very significant. Not only was it a key concept in the aims of Braziers, it was also chosen to balance the emphasis on analytical and reductive thinking' 'Integrative' is also used by Fritjof Capra in summarising the paradigm shifts in both thought and values characteristic of the emerging ecological worldview. He contrasts the integrative way with the self-assertive approach, currently dominant in Western industrial culture, as follows²:

THINKING		VALUES	
<i>self-assertive</i>	<i>integrative</i>	<i>self-assertive</i>	<i>integrative</i>
rational	intuitive	expansion	conservation
analysis	synthesis	competition	co-operation
reductionist	holistic	quantity	quality
linear	non-linear	domination	partnership

Network

This is a term used frequently in systems thinking and in ecological discussions. Capra refers to power exerted through networks, and contrasts this with power through (usually male dominated) hierarchies³. Braziers appears to have introduced the term 'network' in 1984, when the original Sensory Extension Project(SEP) was reborn as the Sensory Network, with the aim of developing

harmonious sub-groups, which included both resident and non-resident community members.

Links with systems theory

Systems thinking was pioneered by biologists, who emphasised the view of living organisms as integrated wholes. It ties in with other perspectives, variously termed holistic, ecological or organismic. The main characteristics of systems thinking emerged at similar times in several disciplines during the first half of the century, but it has only become appreciated in a more general context in the last 25 years. There are many links between Glaister's ideas and systems theory.

In the foreword to *Implications of the Gregarious Habit in Man**, John Woodcock writes of the importance of relationships in Glaister's thinking. He writes "changing appearances owe their particular, externally exhibited qualities to the internal interplay and co-ordination of their differentiated parts". Compare this with the view of the world through systems science, which shows that living systems can only be understood within the context of a larger whole, and that the understanding of life begins with the understanding of pattern, which is the configuration of relationships characteristic of a particular system⁵.

Although focussing mainly on the human mind, Glaister understood clearly the importance of relationship as the basis for reality. He rejected the idea, prevalent for much of the nineteenth century, that everything could be understood by examining in ever greater detail its material constitution. He uses the example of St. Paul's Cathedral, which, if it were reduced to a heap of rubble, would still have all its constituent parts, but would no longer be St Paul's because the relationship between the parts no longer exists⁶. He goes on to state "Relationship is, indeed, about the nearest approach to a short definition of reality at present possible". Similarly, Capra talks of 'reality as a network of relationships'⁷, and stresses that, as shown by quantum physics, there are no parts at all, and that what we call a part is merely a pattern in an inseparable web of relationships.

Likewise, Glaister anticipated the concept of 'emergent properties'. An outstanding property of all existence is the tendency to form multi-levelled structures of systems within systems. Each of these forms a whole with respect to its parts while at the same time being a part of a larger whole. At each level, the observed phenomena exhibit properties that do not exist at the lower level. As Glaister itemised:

The character of an atom depends on the mutual relationship of protons and electrons

The character of a molecule depends on the mutual relationship of atoms

The character of a cell depends on the mutual relationship of molecules
The character of a human body depends on the mutual relationship of cells
The character of a human society depends on the mutual relationship of its members,
or of their minds.

When Glaister was writing, a further aspect of these 'nested systems' had yet to be appreciated, but it is now clear that beyond the relationships between individual human beings, there are relationships between humans and other life, both within specific eco-systems and within the planetary eco-system as a whole. These relationships take the hierarchy of relationships beyond the realm of mind to include the physical body and beyond human life to include all life. With the growing appreciation of the 'mind-body' view of health, to the point where leading thinkers no longer see a clear physical distinction between the brain and the body⁸, consideration needs to be given as to how the research project of Braziers needs to embrace ecological and environmental aspects in the future.

Wilfred Trotter, who was Glaister's teacher and was inspirational in forming Glaister's ideas, wrote of the importance of specialisation and co-ordination⁹ as necessary conditions for the success of a larger unit, which fits closely with the concepts of eco-systems and ecological niches. He also commented that advances in complexity are based on increasing specialisation and co-ordination. This relates to the concept of biodiversity, since a more diverse eco-system, with a more complex set of inter-relationships, is more stable and more capable of surviving damaging influences.

Links with chaos and complexity theory

Emergent properties are a feature of self-organising systems. Understanding the phenomenon of self-organisation has been significantly advanced by the science of complexity theory, which studies the relationship between order and chaos. Given the right conditions, order can appear out of chaos quite spontaneously, a situation which we might also recognise as the occurrence of creativity. These conditions are that a system is at the 'edge of chaos' or in a transitional phase between a stable and unstable situation. In this situation, a very small change can precipitate a major alteration within the system.

Ralph Stacey has applied complexity theory to the ways in which people interact within groups and organisations. His analysis considers how the space for creativity in individuals, groups and organisations is produced by the tension between a dominant, legitimate system, which may be seen as the one concerning the 'real' world, and the shadow system, concerned with play, fantasy or subversive activity. For innovation to occur, parts of the dominant system must be

replaced, a process of destruction and creation which results in mental tension within an individual or stresses and tensions between the members of a group or organisation¹⁰. This space for creativity is the 'edge of chaos'.

Glaister's sensory/resistive differentiation has much in common with the unstable/stable distinction, which lies at the core of chaos theory. Glaister recognised that progress will only occur when both elements are integrated. He wrote "An integration of the two apparently opposed attitudes is necessary; the one demands that we hold fast to that which has, in the past, proved to be indispensable; the other that we should be ready, when occasion demands, to forsake the old and tried paths for the hope of finding something new and better than we have yet known". In effect, he is describing a process of creative destruction.

Exploring and enabling this process is part of the continuing experiment of the Braziers community. It is also of great interest to Ralph Stacey and similar researchers concerned with the application of chaos and complexity theory to the functioning of organisations. According to Stacey a group of individuals can jointly stay at the edge of chaos by maintaining high quality relationships between group members which enables the group to more effectively contain anxiety. Another way of containing anxiety without abandoning the edge of chaos is provided by the "opportunity and capacity for honest self-reflection, that is, when members of a group jointly reflect upon and discuss the system they constitute"¹². However, Stacey does conclude that at any level, whether at that of the individual, group or of the organisation, it is not possible to overcome the need for the anxiety and disorder that are experienced at the edge of chaos. Human consciousness and self-awareness do not enable us to alter the dynamics of the systems that we are and that we constitute with each other when we interact¹³.

Links with evolutionary theory

Modern ideas about evolution see the key to evolutionary change in the role of co-operation between organisms, rather than in competition. To quote Capra, who bases much of this section of his book on the work of Lynn Margulis, who, along with James Lovelock, formulated the Gaia hypothesis¹⁴, "Life is much less a competitive struggle for survival than a triumph of co-operation and creativity. Indeed, since the creation of the first nucleated cells, evolution has proceeded through the ever more intricate arrangements of co-operation and co-evolution"¹⁵. Co-operation can even encompass evolution through symbiosis, termed 'symbiogenesis', with the possibility of new organisms emerging through the symbiosis of formerly independent organisms. Previously, it was believed that

new species resulted only from divergence. Margulis and her co-author, Sagan, comment that "Life did not take over the globe by combat, but by networking"¹⁶.

The appreciation of human beings as social animals, who need and desire to cooperate with other members of their social group, is fundamental to Glaister's ideas¹⁷. His belief that the future of humanity lies in improving the relationships between individuals within a group is consistent with some of the new ideas about evolution. By going on to emphasise that such an advanced social group should make its first concern the conservation of the health of its individual members, he was expressing in a more limited way the current concern about sustainability, which embraces both planetary and personal health in the broadest sense.

Glaister's vision of the emergence of a multi-mental social organism, at some distant time in the future, becomes more credible within the current framework of evolutionary thinking. Margulis, for example, believes that the emergence of nucleated cells was the result of the permanent living together of various bacteria and other micro-organisms, to the extent that the bacterial communities became so utterly interdependent that they functioned as single integrated organisms. To quote: "Life had moved another step, beyond the networking of free genetic transfer¹⁸ to the synergy of symbiosis. Separate organisms blended together, creating new wholes that were greater than the sum of their parts"¹⁹.

Although Glaister's comment that "the power to produce at will a consciously planned variation of a life-pattern is something new"²⁰ is probably valid, there is now evidence that the evolutionary drive of life itself has in the distant past produced an enormous variation in life-patterns. A striking example is in the switch from life forms which were poisoned by the presence of oxygen to those which required it for survival. This took place 2 billion years ago, and resulted in the development of photosynthesis on which nearly all planetary life depends²¹.

Links with permaculture

Permaculture ideas are firmly based in systems theory, which has been shown to connect closely with Glaister's ideas.

In practical terms, permaculture aims to design systems which work on the basis of the useful connections and relationships between the different parts²². This echoes the Braziers approach, which is based on the deliberate creation of differentiated sub-units, whose interplay is found to be more creative and more developed than the ability of any individual²³.

Although it has a strong link with cultivation (the word is derived from 'permanent agriculture'), permaculturists are recognising more and more that achieving sustainable societies and human habitats means concentrating as much, if not more, on human relationships and emotions than on the technical problems. It is in this area that the real challenge lies, and it is in this area that Braziers has been experimenting and researching for nearly 50 years.

To highlight this, Whitefield writes "Learning to communicate with each other openly and without fear is fundamental to creating true community and true communities are the essential building blocks of a sustainable world"²⁴. Glaister expressed the same sentiment as follows: "The simple ethical rule for present conduct, in both private and public relations, is to take advantage of every opportunity to diminish fear"²⁵. Prior to this statement, he had drawn a picture of a future where individuals provide the right conditions for their own lives by providing them for the whole social group, rather than taking them away from all members of the group apart from themselves. In such a future, there would be a diminution of anxiety and an increase in levels of satisfaction within group membership.

It is worth noting that, in 1991, Glynn Faithfull suggested in a paper presented at an International Conference on Residential Adult Education, that residential colleges should be developed as training centres for senior leaders and counsellors, and that "these colleges should provide courses in simpler living and redesigned patterns of human existence, which will consume less and pollute less, and will be interpreted and illuminated by a new and caring ethos and statement of non-material values"²⁶. This vision appears to be very much in tune with the possible establishment of a permaculture training centre at Braziers.

Links with social structures and movements

Glaister's analysis of the consequences of action without thought, which he linked to the resistive-sensitive split, is very similar to the green perspective on the current political and economic problems of our western industrial society. The dominant world view has led to such illogicalities as destroying our life support systems being deemed 'progress' and the destruction of food surpluses when many people are starving. The increasing speed of communication has exacerbated this process, since even less time is left for considered thought between receiving information and acting upon it.

Continuing on the same path, following what has conventionally become identified with progress, e.g. making ever more mass produced products designed to be obsolescent after a short time in the name of economic growth, will make

things worse. Glaister recognised that at such times action without deliberation may be most disastrous and a re-assessment of the way forward is essential²⁷. Much of the work of the Green movement has been concerned with changing people's, politicians' and industrialists' perceptions of the world economic order, and pointing out the need for radical rethinking of its purpose and methods.

One of the outcomes of this work has been the development and spread of LETS(Local Economy and Trading Schemes), An almost identical concept, without, perhaps, the geographical (local) element, was the "New Commerce Guild". This was a kind of private banking and clearing house which used its own units of currency for the exchange of (handmade) goods and services between members²⁸. It formed one of the subsidiary organisations of the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, which strongly influenced Glaister's thinking.

The Braziers Statement of Aims, and the formulation of the research project, has clear resonance with the New Moral Imperative, as outlined by Henryk Skolimowski in *Eco-Philosophy, Designing New Tactics for Living*²⁹. He lists the five characteristics of the New Imperative as:

- behave in such a way as to preserve and enhance the unfolding of evolution
and all its riches;
- behave in such a way as to preserve and enhance life, which is a necessary condition for carrying on evolution;
- behave in such a way as to preserve and enhance the eco-system, which is a necessary condition for further enhancement of life and consciousness;
- behave in such a way as to preserve and enhance the capacities which are the highest developed form of the evolved universe: consciousness, creativeness, compassion;
- behave in such a way as to preserve and enhance human life which is the vessel in which the most precious achievements of evolution are bestowed.

Skolimowski, who cites Teilhard de Chardin as one of his philosophical forerunners, goes on to write : "We cannot understand life unfolding, human life especially, if we do not perceive that to go beyond - whatever the stage of our accomplishment - is in the very nature of life. In this sense, progress is not only justified, but inevitable. But it is progress towards an ever increasing transcendence and perfection"³⁰. Compare this with the statement "...we have the urge, not only to make progress in our understanding of the living social organism, but to live life in increasing consciousness" in the Braziers' Statement

of Aims. I would suggest that if Glaister were alive now, he would incorporate into his vision the significance of the third imperative - the Ecological Imperative. He certainly demonstrated that he understood that humankind is part of nature and that, unless we find ways of living ecologically and in harmony with the natural world, the human race would not survive. He wrote: "We are ourselves part of nature; that part whose destiny it can be to make nature conscious of her purposes. The irresponsible intelligence and knowledge possessed by Man has now become so formidable that it is no longer adequately controlled by the slow process of unconscious nature, so great are his powers of destruction that he is destroying not only the unfit, but the fit with them. If this insane efficiency in rapid destruction is his final contribution to evolution, nature will with his help destroy him"³¹. He may not have envisaged that 'rapid destruction' could come about through economic forces in addition to military ones, but the thesis is clear and is strongly in tune with the Gaia argument.

The Braziers Research Project aims "to make more conscious in ourselves the shape of the process of which we are a part, so that we may facilitate its development more efficiently and harmoniously". To the original concept of a process of evolution towards a higher level of being, we might now wish to consider adding an ecological dimension: the process of developing sustainable ecological, social and economic systems which would enable evolution to proceed to a higher level in which humankind lives and grows in harmony with other life forms and with the planet.

References

¹ Minds in Community: A Report and a Project, RGF, *Braziers Research Communications* 13, 1991, pi 6

² *The Web of Life*, Fritjof Capra, 1997, p 10

³ Ibid p10

⁴ *Implications of the Gregarious Habit in Man*, Norman Glaister, 1949, republished by Braziers 1975

⁵ Capra, 1997, p37

⁶ Glaister, p25

⁷ Capra, p39

⁸ Capra, p276

⁹ For social systems. Woodcock suggests these should be renamed differentiation and communication. For an eco-system, the terms diversity and connection might be more appropriate.

¹⁰ *Complexity and Creativity in Organizations*, Ralph D. Stacey, 1996

¹¹ Glaister, p 35

¹² Stacey, p 162

¹³ Stacey, p 184

¹⁴ The Gaia hypothesis is that the earth is one interconnected complex adaptive system of which humans are only one part.

¹⁵ Capra, p 238

¹⁶ Capra, p 226

¹⁷ Glaister, p 10-11

¹⁸ This refers to the fact that bacteria can exchange genetic material directly with other genes in the same generation

¹⁹ *Microcosmos*, Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan, Summit, New York, 1986, p 119

²⁰ Glaister, p13

²¹ Capra, p234-235

²² *Permaculture in a Nutshell*, Patrick Whitefield, Permanent Publications 1993, p 3

²³ Foreword by John Woodcock to *Implications of the Gregarious Habit in Man*, 1975

²⁴ Whitefield, p 53

²⁵ Glaister, p40

²⁶ *Minds in Community: A Report and a Project*, RGF, *Braziers Research Communications* 13, 1991 p19

²⁷ Glaister, p 23

²⁸ Memories of Norman Glaister, *Braziers Research Communications* 13, 1991 p 10

²⁹ *Eco-Philosophy, Designing New Tactics for Living*, Henryk Skolimowski, Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd, 1981, p78

³⁰ Ibid p 80

³¹ Glaister, p 38