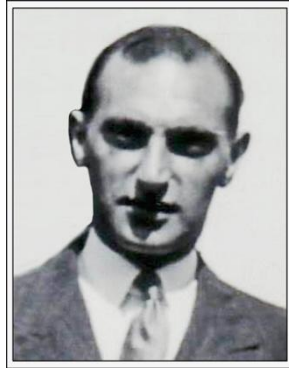


Martial Rose
English, Drama, Education
1952-1965



My First Year at Bretton Hall 1952-53

The interviews for posts at Leyton County High School for Boys and King Alfred's College, Winchester, I remember clearly. My memory of the interview for the post of Head of English and Drama at Bretton Hall in the spring of 1952 is vague, but certain impressions are strong. The vagueness is of my journey, where I stayed for the night, and in what frame of mind I returned to London.

I was interviewed in the Wakefield offices of the West Riding Education Authority, and then taken the seven miles to the College, where other more informal interviews took place.

In the evening, there was a concert. Candidates for the post of lecturer in Music were notified in advance to

contribute to this concert. There were piano and violin contributions, all at a very high level. And then there was the singing of, I think, a Schumann song-cycle. The singer would have been in his forties. He had a splendid voice and sang with great passion, but with such an intensity of feeling that his art was lost in his intense emotional rendering.



Bretton Hall - 1952



Raymond Roberts- 1949

At the end of the concert I had been asked if I would like to go out for a drink with Raymond Roberts, the Music lecturer whose post was about to be filled. Roberts was about to become an HMI. He took me to the Black Bull, and I felt that it was a much needed time of relaxation. I do not think I ever met Roberts again, but his whisking me away from the college to the Black Bull at Midgely was well-judged.

When I took up my post in the autumn I met Geoffrey Laycock who had been appointed as the successful candidate for the Music lectureship. It was then that I discovered that the passionate singer who had performed in the earlier concert had committed suicide within a week of that Bretton Hall recital. He had been due in court charged with some sexual irregularity and had ended his life the day before.

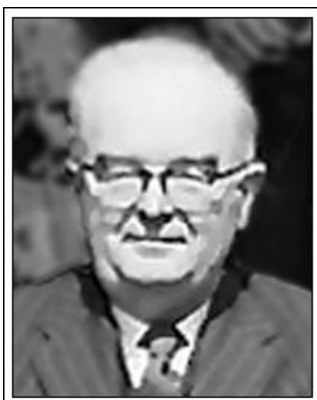
At the beginning of September, 1952, I drove up to Yorkshire to take up my new position. I had exchanged my 1938 Morris 8 for a 1937 Morris 12, a larger, more comfortable car, with a running-board! I had been told that a large part of my time would be taken up with the supervision of students on teaching practice, and that the spread of schools ranged far and wide throughout the West Riding.



*Oak-panelled bedroom on the top floor
of the Mansion*

I was to be resident in the college, and I was allotted a single oak-panelled room on the top floor of the main building overlooking the two lakes and beyond the rising ground leading to High Hoyland. There was not another building to be seen in this panoramic view.

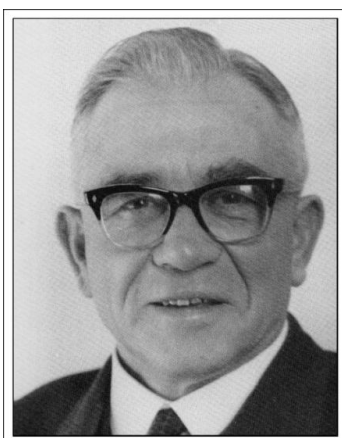
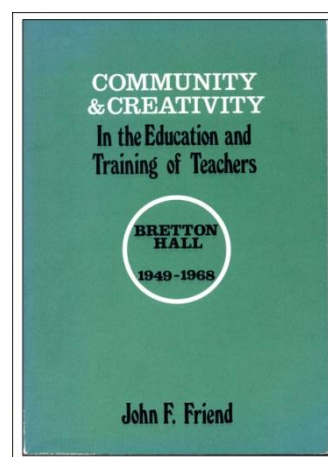
Charles Good, the Head of Education, had the other room at this level, and we shared a bathroom. The extensive flat below provided accommodation for the Principal and his family.



John Frederick Friend

John Friend was the Principal. He had London and Cambridge degrees. His main discipline had been mathematics but later he turned to the philosophy of education. His previous career had been as a teacher, headmaster, Teacher Training College lecturer and an inspector of schools in London. He was the first Principal of Bretton Hall, and served from 1949 to 1968. He died in 1988 aged 86.

John Friend had a profound effect on my own career. After his death, Miss Dunn edited a booklet about him entitled, unfortunately, "*He who is not alight cannot fire others*", echoing the Bretton motto. John Friend also wrote an account of his life and achievement at Bretton: "*Bretton Hall 1949-1968: Creativity and Community in the Education and Training of Teachers.*" His family comprised Mary, his wife, who acted as the college librarian, and his three daughters, Alison, Judith and Hilary, all in attendance at the Wakefield High School for Girls.



Sir Alec Clegg

In 1948 the West Riding of Yorkshire had acquired the 350 acre estate of Bretton Hall with the intention of setting up within it a college for the training of teachers in music, art and drama. The chief education officer was Alec Clegg, and he and his arts advisers were concerned that the first Principal should share their vision of bringing the creative crafts to impact on the lives of the region's children. Many of these children lived either in industrial towns and cities or in villages dominated by coalmining.

A great deal was expected of John Friend, and in the event, he left a heritage to be proud of.



Staff in 1953

In September 1952 when I first joined the staff of Bretton Hall the college had been in existence for three years. Friend had chosen his staff well. *Margaret Dunn*, a Movement lecturer, was Vice Principal, and the other staff were exceptionally talented: *Daphne Bird*, Music; *Seonaid Robertson*, Art; *Paul Haeffner*, English; *Reg Hazell*, Art; *Charles Good*, Education; *Rae Milne*, Primary Education; and there was a large cluster of gifted part-time lecturers.

Most of the students were committed to a two-year course with one main subject, Music or Art. All, in addition, were to study English and Education, including Religious Education, and to undertake rigorous teaching practices in each of the two years. There was in addition a one-year teacher training course for mature students of art or music.

My task was to plan and teach the English course to all students, to take my part in the supervision of students on teaching practice, to plan for the first intake of Drama students in September 1953, to design a new theatre to be built west of the Stable Block, to plan for an '*Experimental Theatre*' to be built within the Stable Block complex, and to bring the students of the college together in a series of play productions. It was a challenging but enthralling prospect.



*Experimental Theatre – housed in the former Coach House in the
Stable Block complex*

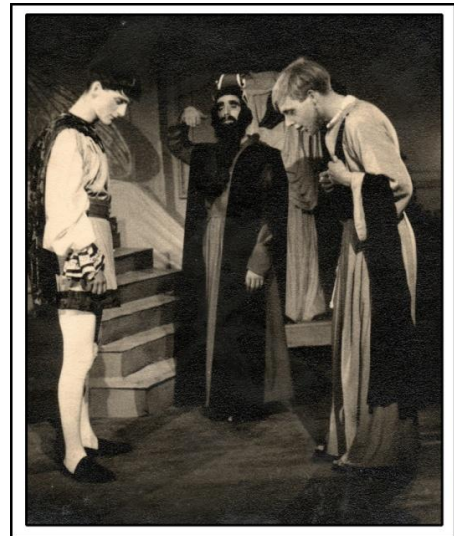
John Friend, who so profoundly influenced the development of the college, had within his personality an amalgam of opposites: the puritan was at war with the free-thinker; discipline was undermined by a desire to break the traces; the mathematician often fought an age-long habit of making the sums add up. But he had appointed a gifted staff, committed to innovative educational ideas, and also committed to implement some of those ideas in conjunction with disciplines other than their own. Friend, who was not deeply informed in any of those disciplines, for most of the time allowed, and from time to time positively promoted, such activities that they flourished magnificently and very often in most unexpected ways.

In 1952 John Friend was fifty, and I was twenty years younger. By and large we got on very well together. He trusted me entirely to work out the course requirements for the English and Drama syllabuses, although it was the sort of undertaking in which I had no previous experience. I was at liberty to choose whatever play I wished to produce with the students, although after my first six months he asked the bishop of Wakefield, Roger Wilson, to have a chat with me about my political leanings.

At the end of the Christmas term I had produced with the second-year students Maxim Gorki's *Lower Depths*, and in the spring term with the first-year students, Jean Paul Sartre's *The Flies*.



1952 - *'Lower Depths'* by Maxim Gorki



1953 - *'The Flies'*,
by Jean Paul Sartre

John and I travelled about the country together interviewing students in such centres as Manchester, Birmingham and London. In London, we would stay at a hotel near King's Cross Station, and the prospective students would be interviewed in the hotel lounge.

We went to the theatre together on numerous occasions, and when he asked me to plan for an *'Experimental Theatre'* we went to Bristol University to meet Glynne Wickham and be shown his own adaptation of a squash court for such a purpose.

We travelled to Stratford-upon-Avon together on more than one occasion to see the performances at the Festival Theatre. We also played tennis and cricket together. In his younger days, he had been a rugby player, but in both his tennis and cricket he showed skill and competitive edge.

John Friend enjoyed men's company in the sports he played and in moments of relaxation, but it was more over a cup of coffee than over a beer at the pub. He was the single male member of his Bretton family, and he looked for and was directed in his educational thinking by the bright, forward-thinking women members of his staff - Margaret Dunn and Rae Milne - who were good friends of Alec Clegg - and Daphne Bird and Seonaid Robertson.

It was Clegg's vision of such a college that had been at the core of its foundation, and Clegg had been involved with John Friend in the appointment of the staff, so many of whom had held previous posts under Clegg in the West Riding. In a way, the Principal was always looking over his shoulder, wondering whether the direction he was taking was in line with the original Clegg philosophy and whether Clegg and the governors were going to support him. He was often unsure of his own judgement in response to works of art and sought reassurance in other people's views. Sometimes these anxieties were acute. An example was the production of *The Winter's Tale* in 1955. This was a production planned for performance on the Upper Terrace. In the event of rain, we presented the play in the Main Hall. The Hall was full, and among the audience was Mr Hyman, deputy chairman of the college governors and a powerful political force within the West Riding. At the end of the performance John Friend came back stage, beaming, and saying "Congratulations, Martial, Alderman Hyman stayed to the end!"

At the end of the autumn term 1952 I produced the staff in *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde. The full-time academic staff were scarcely more than a dozen, and so practically all took part as actors or back-stage helpers.

Margaret Dunn played Lady Bracknell;

Rae Milne – Gwendolene; Daphne Bird - Miss Prism;

Reg Hazell – Lane; Paul Haeffner - Algernon;

I played John Worthing ; John Friend - Canon Chasuble.

Hilary Friend, who would then have been about twelve was our prompter.

"Oh, Daddy," she would cry out regularly during rehearsals, "I wish you would learn your lines!"

The fact that John was prepared to take part at all showed that he was a man of courage. The students' reception of the performance was rapturous because they knew that the staff was putting its reputation on the line with such a display. The play was performed in the Music Room which a few days before had been the setting of a slum in a Russian provincial town for *The Lower Depths*. In December 1952, the whole of the college, including many of the ancillary staff could be seated as an audience in the Music Room. The closeness of the audience to the actors heightened the atmosphere. The scenes in which Canon Chasuble made shielded overtures of love to Miss Prism were hilariously appreciated.

The academic year came to an end with a production of Purcell's opera Dido and Aeneas in beautiful summer weather on the Upper Terrace. It was the first opera I had produced, and with my minimal musical expertise I had been quite anxious. However, Daphne Bird and Geoffrey Laycock trained the singers, conducted the orchestra and ensured that every half hour or so that the harpsichord was retuned.



*Purcell's Dido and Aeneas on the upper terrace at
Bretton Hall - 1953*

George Roberson, without turning a hair, cut great swathes through the tall rhododendrons for the witches to make startling appearances, and the chorus of pirates finished one of their songs at the top of the terrace walk with some of them having climbed on to the classical statue of Virginius, using it as a ship's figure-head.



The Witches' Dance in Dido & Aeneas - 1953

It had been a remarkable year – the most memorable in my life. The setting of Bretton, and my being resident in that setting, had been an intense delight. The Principal had given me every possible support. The academic and artistic freedom that flowed from that support were awesome. My fellow tutors were all greatly gifted and invariably willing to enter into joint enterprises and the students - especially, I think, the more mature, many of whom had been in the services - were wonderfully responsive to the demands of the work both in college and in schools.

At my coming, the college staff, with Margaret Dunn and Rae Milne to the fore, had been apprehensive of the new tutor who had produced plays at a boys' school. Such an activity in itself, I was made to feel, was grossly remiss. Surely such regimented procedures would not fit in well with the more personal creativity which this new college of the arts was founded to propagate. I believe that during the year such anxieties were assuaged.

In a significant way, I think that my real education began at Bretton. I was no longer cosseted by dons or senior masters with whose notions I conformed – and certainly I had been a conformist. I was at Bretton left more or less on my own to work out for myself the principles of learning and teaching; but also some new principles of living. In the summer vacation, I was married in Dereham, Norfolk, to Heather Millar, one of the most gifted mature art students at Bretton.



Heather Millar in 1953

T. S. Eliot's Chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* reflects on life in Canterbury in the absence of the archbishop, as "Living, and *partly* living".

Life at Bretton, in my experience, was never *partly* living.

Martial Rose

2016