



# BRACKEN MOOR

## Education Pack

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# Introduction

*The Tricycle views the world through varied lenses, bringing unheard voices into the mainstream. It presents high-quality and innovative work, which provokes debate and emotionally engages. Located in Brent, the most diverse borough in London, the Tricycle is a local venue with an international vision.*

**Indhu Rubasingham, Artistic Director, Tricycle Theatre.**

This Education Pack is designed to contextualise *Bracken Moor* and give the reader an insight into Shared Experience's rehearsal process. The pack contains historical information and interviews with the writer, director and key members of the production team. For teachers, the pack also includes a lesson plan, resources and suggested activities to extend the theatre experience for students.

**Creative Learning Team  
Tricycle Theatre**

# Shared Experience and expressionism

In our everyday lives we hide much of what we think and feel, for fear we would be considered foolish or even mad. I believe we have a longing to see expressed in the theatre that which we conceal in life; to share our 'madness' and understand that we are not alone.

Central to Shared Experience's approach is the desire to go beyond naturalism and to see into the characters' private worlds. There will be moments on stage when we literally enact whatever a character is secretly feeling or imagining. In more realistic scenes the social façade is a thin layer beneath which bubbles a river of suppressed emotion. During rehearsals we encourage actors to allow this bubbling emotional energy to explode and take over. In a scene where someone is secretly feeling very angry, when we allow the inner to erupt onto the surface they may viciously attack the other person; if the other character is feeling afraid they might crawl under the table. Having allowed the inner to erupt, the actor must return to the scene and struggle to conceal it. Although we may see two people drinking tea, we sense that underneath the social ritual it is as if murder is taking place.

This emphasis on subjective experience runs through all areas of the production. For example, the setting of the play will be more expressive of what a place feels like than what it realistically looks like. In *Jane Eyre* everything on stage was grey or black to express the loneliness of Jane's inner world. In *War and Peace* the set was a hall of mirrors to suggest the vanity and narcissism of the aristocracy in Tolstoy's Russia. In *The House of Bernarda Alba* the house felt like a prison. We decided to make the door colossally large and encrusted it with locks and bolts. It is this emphasis on the 'inner' or the subjective experience which characterises expressionism and it is at the heart of Shared Experience's approach.

**Polly Teale, Artistic Director**





Joseph Timms, Helen Schlesinger

Photo: Tristram Kenton

## Britain in the 1930s

There were two opposing realities in 1930s Britain: one was a very bleak picture of unemployment, hardship and poverty for the majority; the other was rising prosperity, modernisation and increased standards of living for the minority. In *Bracken Moor* we have a window into these two realities: the life of John Bailey and the poor working class mining community, contrasting with the affluent middle class represented by Vanessa and Geoffrey Avery. Through Terence Avery we see an alternative perspective; a spiritual path that focuses on our common humanity. Terence embodies the possibility of a very different future. He challenges capitalism and a system that is based on hierarchy and ownership and acquisition. He questions the current way of living and adopted social structures, talks about the idea of “our real capabilities” (Act 1, Scene 1) and challenges Harold’s rigid ideas about the meaning of progress. The play asks: *What is progress?* and *How do we measure success?* The parallels between the 1930s Great Depression in which *Bracken Moor* is set and the recent financial crisis and economic recession makes this a pertinent time for us to be asking such questions again.

### The Great Depression

During the 1920s, Britain was struggling to pay for the effects of World War I and there was mass unemployment. Then in 1929 the US stock market crashed, triggering a world depression. World trade collapsed, causing increased unemployment and decreased spending, prices dropped and credit dried up. Many countries introduced taxes on imports and the value of British exports plummeted, sinking Britain’s industrial areas into poverty.

In *Bracken Moor* we find ourselves in the Pritchards’ house, in the hills overlooking a mining village in Yorkshire in 1937. John Bailey, chief collier, begins the play appealing against Harold’s decision to close Ramshaw Drift mine:

*...if you decide to close it Mr Pritchard – the whole village will be decimated. There is no alternative work – nothing left for these men to do. And they have given their best – as have their fathers and their fathers’ fathers before them – to help make this industry the proudest Britain has to offer. (Act 1, Scene 1).*

Bailey wants to save the jobs of the miners by delaying installation of new machines. Many obstacles are in his way: the grand house he is standing in and his lack of status relative to his boss, his fear of losing his job and ultimately failing his own people. In an almost revolutionary act, Bailey suggests that the workforce are more important than the mine’s profit and that during a recession sacrifices should be made by those who have the most and not those “who have nothing left to sacrifice” (Act 1, Scene 1).

## The Means Test

Registered unemployment climbed to almost 3.5 million in 1932. As a reaction to the unemployment crisis the British government raised income tax and cut unemployment pay by 10 per cent, introducing the Means Test (1931) to determine who qualified for unemployment benefit. This was a degrading and intrusive test which divided families and broke up communities, leading to further hardship.

An ex-miner from Caerphilly describes the Means Test:

*...you were told to sell a wardrobe this week, some chairs next week, some pictures the week after, until perhaps you only had your bed, two chairs and a table left. Only then would you be able to claim something off the Public Assistance". He explains that it drove "many more young men and women from home than anything else, because if you had a son working, and the father was out of work, the son was made to keep him."*

***The Worst of Times- an Oral History of the Great Depression in Britain, Nigel Gray, 1985.***

## Traditional industries & unemployment

The highest areas of unemployment and poor industrial growth were in Northern Ireland, the lowlands of Scotland, mining valleys of Wales and the north east of England, where the staple industries (including coal, oil, ship-building, cotton and wool) were situated. Mass investment was made in these traditional industries during the First World War: iron, steel, coal and ship-building were needed to provide for battle and to rebuild nations after the war, but once these tasks were completed large-scale production in these industries was no longer needed. This led to entire towns 'dying' when the factories, mines or plants that had been their main sources of employment were closed down.

## Hunger Marches

The government's lack of response to these failing industries led The National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM) to organise a series of 'Hunger Marches'. The largest in scale was the 1932 National Hunger March for which groups of unemployed workers walked to London from all over the country to present a petition to Parliament demanding the abolition of the Means Test and protesting about the 10 per cent cut in benefits.

A leader from the women's contingent, comrade Lily Webb declared:

*We are fighting to abolish the rotten Means Test. The workers all over the country are fighting against it as they never fought against anything before, and we will continue to fight until it is smashed... Before we can overthrow unemployment we shall have to overthrow capitalism.*

**from the National Archives, Hunger March speeches: 'Extracts from transcript of shorthand notes taken by Police Sergeant A. Davies at the National Hunger Marcher's demonstration in Hyde Park, 27th October 1932'.**

The Jarrow Crusade of 1936 was among the last and one of the smallest of the hunger marches of the 1930s. Unemployed shipyard workers marched to London to present a petition to the Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin demanding that a steel works be built to bring back jobs to their town. Notably it was not organised by the NUWM, and was intended to be non-political. The radical local Labour MP, Ellen Wilkinson, sometimes marched with the group to help raise the profile of the crusade. The government gave no answer to the marchers and they had their dole pay deducted because they had not been available for work. However, the Jarrow marchers achieved their aim of raising public awareness and generating sympathy. These protests influenced a national consensus that extreme poverty must end, which eventually led to the 1945 Labour government's welfare reforms, which included the creation of the NHS and the social security system.

## Fascism

Between the First and Second World Wars, fascism spread across Europe. The first fascist movements emerged in Italy around World War I, founded by Benito Mussolini, who ruled the country as leader of The National Fascist Party from 1922-1943. Hitler and the Nazis rose to power in Germany in 1933.

The earliest fascist groups in Britain were influenced by Mussolini's ideology, but were undeveloped, gaining little attention from the press or public and remaining on the fringes of society. In 1932 Sir Oswald Mosley formed The British Union of Fascists (BUF), attempting to launch fascism into the mainstream of society. He had strong connections with Hitler and Mussolini, the latter of whom supported and partly funded the BUF. Mosley had great ambitions to lead the rise of fascism in Britain:

*Mosley believed that fascism would come to power in Britain as it had in Germany: when the economy collapsed and people sought extreme solutions... For Mosley it was fascism that would bring order out of economic chaos...*

***The Thirties: An Intimate History, by Juliet Gardiner.***

There was strong anti-fascist resistance from the Labour, Conservative and Communist Parties and the Jewish communities. Resistance came to a head most famously in the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, when Mosley planned to lead the BUF on a march through the East End of London, which at the time had a large Jewish population. There was a clash between the Metropolitan Police, who were overseeing the march, and anti-fascist groups who had travelled to the area to disrupt the march. The protesters rioted with the police and Mosley agreed to abandon the march.

Although Mosley briefly gained some moderate popular support, the public eventually widely condemned the movement. BUF never won a parliamentary seat and never had a local councillor elected. In 1936 the government banned the wearing of the fascist Black Shirt uniform and by 1940 banned the BUF outright.

## Slum clearing

House building soared in the thirties and local authorities provided one million new houses in an effort to clear the poverty-stricken slums and overcrowded housing that afflicted most large industrial towns and cities. The 1935 Housing Act laid down enforceable housing standards for the first time. New tenements were built in cities under slum clearance projects and were a vast improvement on the slums they replaced: many had gardens or outside spaces as well as the use of gas and electricity. This rehousing scheme offered people a better standard of domestic living, but also meant that as people were rehoused in different areas to those they had lived and worked in previously, communities were broken up and families were fragmented.

*The trouble is in destroying the slum you destroy other things as well.*

### ***The Road to Wigan Pier, George Orwell***

In George Orwell's book *The Road to Wigan Pier*, after describing the devastating poverty he had witnessed in Lancashire and Yorkshire, he critiques the rehousing scheme. Whilst acknowledging the benefits, he makes a case for the loss of 'home', 'community' and 'liberty' of the working class people who were rehoused:

*Slum clearance means diffusion of the population. This is all very well in a way; you have got the people out of fetid alleys into places where they have room to breathe; but from the point of view of the people themselves, what you have done is pick them up and dump them down 5 miles from their work.*

Orwell examines the discontent of people who have been rehoused: "there is an uncomfortable, almost prison-like atmosphere, and the people who live there are perfectly well aware of it." After a detailed description of the process he sums it up as: "being done in a monstrously inhuman manner...There is something ruthless and soulless about the whole business." And Orwell makes his conclusion that: "On balance, the Corporation estates are better than the slums; but only by a small margin."

## The peace movement

The outlook of the country in the 1930s was haunted by the collective trauma of the First World War. Nobody wanted another war and there was a strong antiwar sentiment. This revulsion motivated the formation of organised antiwar and pacifist groups with strong connections with the Labour Party and socialist movement. Although religious belief had been in decline since the War, aspects of the peace movement were also linked to Christianity.

There was popular support for the principle of *collective security* through the League of Nations: an international organisation, which had been formed after the First World War to provide a forum for resolving international disputes, whose aim was to maintain world peace.

## Recovery, prosperity and modernisation

The government gave up the 'Gold Standard' (a monetary system in which the standard economic unit of account is based on a fixed quantity of gold) in 1931, meaning that sterling was devalued by 25 per cent, helping exporters by making their goods cheaper abroad, and helping to start wider economic recovery. Interest rates were reduced, so there were lower debt payments, which enabled more spending and encouraged people to take out more or larger loans. Local authorities built 500,000 council houses, contributing further to the recovery by injecting money into the economy.

The 1934 Unemployment Act separated unemployment benefits and insurance benefits, and the 10 per cent cut in dole was reversed. This change helped dispel the notion that the poor were lazy and encouraged a sense of collective responsibility: 'Society went some way towards accepting that unemployment was not a failing of the people, dispelling the notion that the poor could work if they really wanted to' (from the National Archives: '1930s Depression and Unemployment').

Although a partial recovery occurred in Britain in the mid- and late-1930s, and in London some parts of the economy thrived, there remained permanent depression areas. In 1934 the government passed the Special Areas Act, which identified South Wales, Tyneside, West Cumberland and Scotland as having special employment requirements.

It was not until the late 1930s that the darkness of unemployment lifted from the whole of Britain.

## Mechanisation

The modernisation of Britain during the Great Depression happened through a process of mechanisation: machines were introduced into industry, replacing human physical labour. Although this ultimately helped to lift Britain out of the economic depression, *Bracken Moor* asks: *What is lost as a result of that process?*

*And so the machines took over and robbed us of some of the better things that made us human to begin with, the best of our natures and our imaginations.* Terence; Act 1, Scene 1

George Orwell's experience and first-hand research of the extreme poverty in the industrial areas of working class Britain gave him cause to declare a warning against the power of progress and modernisation. Orwell reported how new technology was causing workers to be replaced, in effect killing industry and communities. He wrote of the contradiction of striving for progress whilst losing power:

*The tendency of mechanical progress is to make your environment safe and soft; and yet you are striving to keep yourself brave and hard...  
The logical end of mechanical progress is to reduce the human being to something resembling a brain in a bottle.*

### **The Road to Wigan Pier**

Harold and Terence represent opposing world views on the theme of 'progress'. *Bracken Moor* director, Polly Teale, describes Harold's beliefs as stemming from principles of 'capitalism and consumerism; systems based upon ownership and profit', whereas Terence's views originate from a 'more humanitarian and spiritual, creative vision of our 'true capabilities', one where 'progress' is not measured by accumulation of wealth and material goods and power.'" (Polly Teale, on the themes within *Bracken Moor*, March 2013)

## Comparisons to today

Contemporary British journalists, historians and social commentators have made comparisons between the 1930s economic depression and our recent recession. The re-examination of Margaret Thatcher's legacy in the wake of her recent death has reignited the public debate around modernisation: whether its progress benefits or damages a country. The question of whether material progress leads to spiritual destruction in *Bracken Moor* feels pertinent to Britain's present day climate.

When Vanessa Avery and Elizabeth Pritchard are alone together for the first time, Vanessa encourages Elizabeth to employ an interior designer to redecorate in an attempt to bring her friend 'back to life' and dispel her grief about the loss of her son. Unintentionally, her suggestion reveals her belief that when faced with bereavement, it is not right to go through a process of grief, but rather to numb it, or distract from it with consuming; that buying and possessing can replace spiritual healing. Elizabeth replies with sarcasm: "We can stand in this room holding cocktails and saying witty things to each other and laughing at one another's jokes and reminding ourselves how brilliant our lives are and so full of mirth and meaning... My son died Vanessa..." (Act 1, Scene 1)

Polly Teale reveals what it means when Terence describes feeling "[a]s if the walls had collapsed" when he allows himself to channel the spirit of Edgar:

*...this conveys the possibility of the loss of ego and a state of total connectedness, where each person is responsible for the whole of humanity and recognises our interdependence.*

### **Polly Teale, on the themes within *Bracken Moor*, March 2013**

This idea of transformation and revelation is conveyed in the stage design for *Bracken Moor*.

Tom Piper's set represents the Pritchards' house as a fortress that the outside forces of nature gradually invade. After the characters visit the moor, their clothes become ripped and filthy, stripping away the veneer of privilege and revealing something rawer. The theme of 'progression' is explored in the stage design. Harold's fortress-like home is gradually disintegrating as the coal advances on his existence like a landslide.

After Harold's decision to sign the legal papers for the purchase and delivery of the new machinery from America, the final image of the play is Harold's son Edgar appearing covered in soil and dirt saying: "Father". It is as if Harold's belief in progress cannot suppress the primal force of nature or the spirit. By suppressing his grief and denying his humanity Harold is unable to evolve and move forward. Unlike Elizabeth, who is released by Terence's vision of humanity as one being, Harold remains isolated and alone at the end of the play, haunted by Edgar's loss.





Sarah Woodward  
Photo: Tristram Kenton

## The 1930s: Defining the roles of men and women

The First World War had a strong influence on the progress of women's rights in Britain. It opened up new employment opportunities for many women, who filled the positions of the millions of men sent to fight. Jobs in transport, munitions factories, and other major areas that had been dominated by men now became increasingly feminised. After the War, the loss of so many men meant lots of women had to work to support their families, but popular opinion persisted that married working women were denying jobs to unemployed men, so employment options for married women were restricted. However, women were first given the vote in the 1920s; the 1930s saw Britain's first female MPs and many new organisations representing women's interests were established, such as women's trade unions and the women's institute. Nevertheless, women continued to face barriers to equal pay and to equal opportunities in certain professions.

Women died as a result of complications in childbirth in high numbers. There were no antibiotics and no understanding of the importance of sterilisation. Most women would have had children at home. Lucy Baldwin (the wife of Stanley Baldwin, Conservative Prime Minister: 1923–24, 1924–29, 1935–37), an influential woman of the time, campaigned for better conditions for women in childbirth and for free maternity care. She helped the introduction of 'gas and air' (a mix of nitrous oxide and oxygen, which when inhaled provides pain relief for childbirth) and the first types of antibiotics, free for all pre- and post-natal mothers.



In women's fashion, after the boyish styles of the previous decade, the trend in the 1930s was for more conservative and conventionally feminine styles: bias cuts, longer lengths, and indented waistlines that clung to the contours of the body, defining shape and curves. Bras and corsets were seen as important for a healthy physique. In direct response to the challenges of the depression, men's clothes were made with less cloth, colours were muted and styles were also more formal than the previous decade.

Many young working class women with little education worked as household servants. Eileen in *Bracken Moor* may well have started work for the Pritchards when she was just 14 years old and would have come from a local mining family. It would have been acceptable for her to work until she was married. Many women were expected to marry young, have children and look after the home and family while their husbands worked and brought in a weekly wage. Housework was gruelling in those days as everything was done by hand and took much longer.

Married middle- and upper-class women like Elizabeth Pritchard did not work and would probably never have had a waged job. In fact, a middle-class woman was often raised to be a decorative status symbol, being so dependent on her husband and servants that she had no skills. We can imagine that this may have felt like a futile existence for some women.

### **Male and female roles in *Bracken Moor***

Harold and Elizabeth would have been brought up with very defined and limited ideas of male and female roles. We meet this couple at a transformative time in their lives. Harold is defined by his role as 'alpha male': high status, dominant and controlling over his wife and staff. Elizabeth is just beginning to recognise her total dependence on her husband and the way that it has defined her life and choices. As the play unfolds she starts to question everything about her previous existence and realise that she must leave Harold if she is to take responsibility for her life. At the beginning of the play when the Averys first arrive, Harold offers to pour Elizabeth a drink, perhaps in order to pacify her. She refuses, saying in front of their guests: 'Thank you darling, I'll do it myself.' This small moment indicates Elizabeth's first attempt to resist her husband's control and begin to function as an independent being. At the end of the play, Elizabeth's decision to leave Harold with a plan to teach French in London can be seen as something of a revolutionary act.

Divorce was not common in the 1930s and divorced women were shunned by society and treated as outcasts. Many wives could not leave their husbands even if they wanted to, because they did not have the financial independence that was needed to survive. With these obstacles, many women were forced to stay in unhappy marriages.

It was not uncommon for middle- and upper-class boys, such as Geoffrey Avery, his son Terence and Harold Pritchard, to be sent to boarding school. Many boys were taken away from their mothers at just 7 years old. It was thought to be essential to sever the tie between mother and son in order to encourage independence and self-reliance in young men. Any expression of vulnerability or weakness was seen as dangerous and punished accordingly. Harold and Terence's personalities may be interpreted as different reactions to the system: Harold has closed down his ability to feel emotions and express grief, while Terence has developed a determined insistence to explore what lies beneath the surface. He questions the status quo and society's expectations of how a man should be.

In recent times, there has been acknowledgment and analysis of the possible buried trauma of being sent away to boarding school at a young age. In a talk to the *Boarding Concern Conference* (2009) psychotherapist Darrel Hunneybell described the emotional survival strategy adopted by boys sent to boarding school:

*...he turns to the masculine school environment and banishes all that is nurturing and feminine...Such deep grief, hidden from view, kept in his pocket like a cherished object, a secret that cannot be shared. Over time this grief gets buried deeper and deeper...*

This offers an insight into Harold's character and his emotional capacity, and helps us understand the way he has dealt with the pain from the death of his son. Harold and Elizabeth's class, education and social conditioning have a significant impact on their behaviour, and their isolated way of grieving polarises them.

In the final scene of *Bracken Moor*, when Elizabeth leaves Harold, he finally attempts to articulate his deepest fears:

*My father. His father before him. It isn't easy is what I think I'm trying to say. And everything we have, the roof above our head, the food on our table, the walls that keep us warm, Elizabeth. Sometimes I feel as if the walls will fall apart if I cease to carry it on my shoulders.*

Here Harold reveals to himself and Elizabeth the weight of responsibility he feels to sustain their very existence.

Please see Rehearsal Diary Extract (p 15) on how gender roles were established during the rehearsal process.

# Interview with Alexi Kaye Campbell, Writer

## What made you want to tell this story?

For me, writing often starts with an image. In this case, the image I had was of a child who had died in a terrible way. I don't know why that was; you never really know where these thoughts and ideas come from. I had also read a book about the 1930s and I was very interested in the similarities between that era and our present day. And I wanted to write something slightly heightened, and a period piece allowed me to do that. The script is on the cusp of naturalism, just a little more poetical.

## What are some of the similarities that you mention between the thirties and now?

The obvious parallel is of course economic; the depression of the thirties chimes with our current recession. And it strikes me that in both instances, the response has been a more rigorous questioning of the system. People looked for – and are looking for – alternative social and economic models. After the First World War, a lot of soul searching went on. The relentless mechanisation of the thirties came under scrutiny from politically minded young people like Terence, who started to ask whether machines were serving man or whether it was in fact the other way around. George Orwell writes about it in his book *The Road to Wigan Pier*, which I used as a reference when writing the play and which we've dipped into during rehearsals. Today, we are living through the internet age and while no one would deny that the technological revolution has had huge benefits, it has also made whole professions redundant. It feels like there has been a need, in both periods of history, to step back and re-evaluate notions of progress. That's a very big part of the play.

## And how would the play define progress?

The character of Terence suggests that there is such a thing as spiritual progress. A need to understand more fully the forces which drive us psychologically. Progress cannot and should not be measured only by technical and economic advancements; we must honour and evolve the spiritual self, too.

## This ties into ideas around belief.

I think one of the big conflicts of our time is the split between extreme fundamentalism in religion and a kind of fundamentalist atheism for those who believe nothing at all. I'm very interested in what lies between those two extremes.

## Another strong opposition the play explores is the split between masculine and feminine values.

Yes, I'm interested in the way that Western culture and society has been shaped on strictly patriarchal values. At the heart of the play is a challenge to that patriarchy – a challenge to Harold, the archetypal man of the era. And that challenge to the status quo is frightening. Harold's effort and ultimate inability to change at the end of the play touches on a crisis of masculinity and an interrogation of patriarchy which is going on right now.

## In what ways is patriarchy being interrogated?

When I talk about masculinity, I mean to some extent the need to objectify and dominate 'the other'. All of our social and political systems have evolved along those lines. The feminine seems to understand more of the connectedness of everything. That's what the play is about. Terence brings into the Pritchards' house this sense that everything is connected in some way that the masculine conscious mind can't quite comprehend. At the end of the play, with the final image of Harold perhaps losing his mind, you realise how imperative it is that the masculine mind does start to understand and embrace this connectedness, or it'll be at its own peril.

## Who would you say that the play is ultimately about?

I think it's about the artist. The play is ultimately about art, and Terence is the artist. He enters the Pritchards' world and through the work of art that he creates – through his transformation, his performance – he reveals new ideas and new attitudes to them. He liberates them. I'm very interested in the role of the artist and the role of art more broadly in today's world, especially at a time when religion doesn't necessarily feature in the way that it used to. Theatre's roots were very much tied to mysticism and shamanism and I think we've lost that or forgotten that. The shaman [*a person who acts as an intermediary between the natural and supernatural worlds*] is one of the things that the play seeks to reaffirm, and the power of the artist as shaman is represented in Terence. Everything in our culture is so temporal and secular that we've forgotten the mysticism of art.



**You started out as an actor. How did you make the transition into writing?**

For me, the transition from acting to writing was a very natural one. Both acting and writing are forms of storytelling. As an actor, you have to put yourself in one character's shoes; as a writer, you have to put yourself in lots of characters' shoes.

**And as an actor you've been directed by Polly [Teale] in Shared Experience's *Kindertransport*. How did that experience feed into your work on *Bracken Moor* with her?**

Yes, I first worked with Polly as an actor, so I'm very familiar with her approach. Both she and Shared Experience as a company are very drawn to the world of the subconscious; to what goes on for each of us underneath the social facade or 'cover'. I know that Polly is also very interested in notions of masculinity and femininity and the effort to find a middle ground, so when I was commissioned to write a play for her these themes were very much at the forefront of my mind. I suppose the play was tailor-made, in a way; I was able to write something for Polly and her sensibility.





Polly Teale, Joseph Timms

Photo: Tristram Kenton

## Interview with Polly Teale, Director

### **The play hinges on a significant event in the past. How do you go about exploring characters' pasts in your rehearsals?**

Exploration of back-story feels very important in our work on *Bracken Moor* because the two families in the play have known each other for a long time and there's an incredibly rich, shared history between them. There needs to be a reality and a consensus about the past among the actors, so that any references in the play to shared memories are clear and specific.

The event you refer to – Edgar's death – is something very traumatic and we've been gradually inching our way towards it. We've discussed it at length and we've had a bereavement councillor – someone who works with parents who have lost children – come into our rehearsals and talk to us, very lucidly, about that experience. We're now at the point where we're ready to investigate through detailed improvisations exactly what happened in the days leading up to Edgar's death, and also what happened when Terence reconstructed it. It is quite challenging territory but it feels absolutely necessary that we get to grips with it.

### **How have other improvisations that you've done shed light on the present action of the play and the relationships within it?**

We've improvised both Harold's and Terence's experiences of being at boarding school as boys and talked about the ways in which those experiences might have shaped them. It's interesting because we found that they've both come through the same, rather brutal system, but that their responses to it have been diametrically opposed. Harold has imbibed and replicated a very male boarding school culture as a grown man, while Terence has resisted and rejected it, reinventing himself outside of it. That tension – that conflict of values and attitudes – becomes very interesting when the pair meet in the first act of the play, because Harold sees in Terence everything he has suppressed and denied in himself. It's wonderfully complex because on the one hand there's an impulse on Harold's part to squash Terence, just as Harold himself was once squashed as a boy at boarding school, but on the other hand there is a strange fascination with, and pull towards, Terence's whole-hearted embrace of everything Harold has locked away.

### **And what about the women in the play – what are the values that they have embraced growing up in the early 20th century?**

Well, Elizabeth has been brought up to make a good match and to act as a beautiful decoration to her husband. She has lived her life as an orbit to her husband, who exists at the centre of her universe. And she has never really acquired any real skills. Her son talks about the fact that she can't fry an egg, and that she doesn't know the difference between a grater and a whisk. If the servants left, she would be unable to look after herself. But throughout the course of the play – through her encounter with Terence and everything he unearths – she begins to recognise her total dependence on Harold, and an urge to take more responsibility for her life starts to take seed. There is something fascinating about that process of dawning consciousness.

### **Who do you think the play is ultimately about?**

I think that one of the things that makes the play so brilliant is that every single one of the characters is complex and real. Every character – down to Eileen, the maid – has a real journey and a vivid inner life. A maid in a play can so often feel one-dimensional or underdeveloped – you never really get to find out what the world is like through their eyes. I love that Alexi [Kaye Campbell] allows us glimpses into all of their lives. But I suppose at the very centre of the play are Harold, Elizabeth and Terence, and there's something about that triangle – the battle that is being played out between them – that is central to the piece.

### **What has been the biggest challenge in directing *Bracken Moor*?**

Initially, I wondered if it might be the fact that the play is on the edge of melodrama. It feels important that while it's a very extreme situation, the characters should feel completely believable and truthful, and even Terence's 'performance' should be completely convincing. But actually we have such good actors that that hasn't really been an issue! I think exploring the loss is probably one of the hardest things; dealing with something so awful that most of us can't even bear to imagine it.

### **You've had Alexi in your rehearsal room before as an actor. How does that affect your relationship with him now, as a writer?**

Well, when I worked with Alexi as an actor I didn't know he was a writer and I didn't think of him as such. But I remember that I always loved having him in the room because he offered such an emotionally intelligent perspective on the work. I think it helps that he has experienced many of the Shared Experience exercises and understands them from the inside as an actor. There's a shared language that's already there and a mutual interest in psychological exploration. It's always a real privilege having a working relationship with someone that spans a long period of time, because you can evolve a strong sympathy, while changing each other's thinking along the way. With Alexi, I feel very supported and secure in my sense of what his input is in a rehearsal room.

### **Helen Schlesinger (who plays Elizabeth) was in your first Shared Experience show. How has your rehearsal room changed since then?**

When I first worked with Helen I was quite young – only a fledgling director really – and I was co-directing with Nancy [Meckler], who I learnt a huge amount from. I think I do quite a lot more detailed back-story work now, and I spend more time engaging in discussion with the actors than I used to. As time has gone by I'm more interested in coming to a shared and detailed conception of the events that have shaped the play, and that often happens through discussion initially. But we have Liz [Ranken], our movement director, with us twice a week, so there are still those sessions which help the actors to enter the text from a completely different, more physical place, and I still lead physical exercises to release the scenes. Our work on characters' inner lives offers actors the opportunity to experience emotions which are buried beneath the surface, rather than just talking about them. I think those exercises inform the work on the text and, cumulatively, they help to add depth to the performances.

# Rehearsal Diary by Rosy Banham, Assistant Director

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May

This morning we began to explore ideas of masculinity in 1930s Britain through discussion, physical exercises and improvisations. In the script, Harold describes his desire to instil in his son, Edgar, 'some understanding of what the world expects of a man'. We started by talking about the play's very particular social context, in which boys and men were strongly discouraged from displaying emotion or vulnerability. It is thought that this suppression often began at boarding school, where boys would be sent as young as seven. Polly shared with the group extracts from two texts which take as their subject the boarding school experience. The first was a scholarly article about the long-term effects of this particular type of schooling and the way in which it silences any apparent dependence or supposed weakness. The second text was Roald Dahl's childhood autobiography, *Boy*, in which Dahl recounts a brutal caning dealt to him by his headmaster. These references gave the company a window into a very particular world which, for most of us, is completely alien.

Following our initial discussions, Liz Ranken, Movement Director, asked each member of the cast to recall a time in their lives when they had been punished. She then prompted the actors to physicalise their memories; to express their own particular feelings of being punished through their bodies. The cast's movements began to reflect their inner states as they embodied the shame, fear, hurt and anger that so often accompany punishment. After some time, Liz asked everyone to return to a more naturalistic physical state while continuing to carry that *feeling* of being punished around with them. It was fascinating to watch the latent tensions manifest themselves more subtly, often in a somewhat aggressive posture. The punished almost instinctively become the punishers.

Next, Polly set up a series of improvisations intended to reveal more of Harold's personal history and the ways in which his upbringing might have influenced the typically 'male' attitudes of the grown man the audience meets in the play. The first of these improvisations saw Harold, aged six, seek comfort from his mother after being disciplined by his father moments earlier for misbehaving. His mother gently cheered him with the help of his favourite toy. The next improvisation placed Harold, now aged eight, in his dormitory bed during his first night at boarding school, clutching the very same toy as he wept for his mother. The rest of the cast played school children in nearby beds who bullied and taunted Harold for his wimpy behaviour, tossing his toy cruelly between them while shaming him for having wet the bed. Polly asked one actor to enter the scene as a teacher, and to humiliate Harold in front of his new classmates, forcing him to parade the length of the dormitory with his soiled sheets wrapped around his waist 'like a girl'.

Polly paused the improvisation and asked Daniel Flynn, the actor playing Harold, to take over as the teacher inflicting punishment once she resumed the action. Daniel therefore selected his target and, assuming the role of teacher, began to humiliate in the same way that he had, only moments earlier, experienced being



Joseph Timms, Daniel Flynn, Anthony Byrne

Photo: Tristram Kenton



Anthony Byrne, Natalie Gavin, Joseph Timms

Photo: Tristram Kenton



humiliated. We began to understand something of Harold's urge to make others feel as helpless and powerless as he once felt, and to take control and exert power having known what it feels like to be entirely without either. The character has driven his emotions underground, constructing a hard, almost impenetrable outer shell, which he has carried into his adult life and never truly dropped.

All of these exercises informed and enhanced the scene work that came later in the day. Daniel's physicality naturally started to shift – he began to embody Harold more fully, having physicalised and internalised the experience of being punished, and having improvised detailed episodes from the character's past. The morning's exercises guided us to Harold's super objective (his guiding 'want' in life, from which all of his other smaller 'wants' arguably stem): 'to be in control'.

### Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May

As a counterpart to our work yesterday on masculinity, we looked today at the experiences that Elizabeth and Vanessa might have had growing up as young, moneyed women in early 20<sup>th</sup> century London. Actors Helen Schlesinger and Sarah Woodward shared some of their research on the period, showing us photographs of the debutantes who were effectively exhibited in the 'London marriage market' and presented at Court to rich, young bachelors.

We improvised an imagined soiree in the 1910s, when Elizabeth and Vanessa would have been two such young debutantes. Polly initially placed the men on the outskirts of the space and asked them simply to watch as the women meandered, their every delicate action intended to seduce and to charm their captive audience. They adorned themselves with jewels, gloves, and parasols while Polly asked them to accentuate different parts of their bodies for the men's pleasure; first their necks, then their waists and then their ankles. The improvisation was wordless to begin with, and the women were reminded always to create beautiful pictures in the space; to use each other in forming alluring images. At no point were they allowed to forget their life ambition – namely, to attract a man to 'keep' them.

When Polly introduced the men into the scenario, she asked the women to act as accessories to their male counterparts. Their purpose was to support them as far as possible, both physically and vocally, peppering their exchanges with encouraging words, girlish laughter, small elaborations and subservient gestures. Liz Ranken touched upon the Laban efforts (a scale of movement qualities which help actors to access characters physically), prompting the women to take on a free, light and indirect physicality, while the men were asked to become more bound, heavy and direct.

In the afternoon, we began to look at the scene in which the Averys and the Pritchards meet for the first time in ten years. Polly asked the actors to bring something of the soiree that they had improvised earlier in the day into the playing of the scene. Vanessa and Geoffrey in particular repeatedly attempt to lighten the mood with jokes and anecdotes, while Elizabeth does her best – initially at least – to reconnect with her old friends. The memory of the 'London scene' offered each character a social facade, which, under the strained circumstances of the situation, prove difficult to maintain. For Elizabeth in particular, the obstacle, as Polly terms it, is too great. The memory of Edgar's death causes the facade to fall away as she painfully reminds Vanessa, 'My son died'.



Simon Shepherd, Anthony Byrne, Daniel Flynn, Joseph Timms

Photo: Tristram Kenton



Daniel Flynn, Joseph Timms  
Photo: Tristram Kenton

## Interview with Daniel Flynn, Actor

### What drew you to the play and to the character of Harold?

I just thought it was the most fantastic new play I'd ever read. There was something about it taking place on one set across two scenes and four acts, and in a period setting – it's like a proper old-fashioned play with hugely modern and relevant themes.

And Harold... I suppose there's a lot of him in me, or me in him. I'm probably a little more open than Harold is, but I have experienced that male tendency to shut emotions away. I remember when I was young I actually taught myself how *not* to cry. Later in life, I found that quite damaging – bottling things up in that way. At the time the play is set, between the two World Wars, that kind of repression would have been hardwired into a whole generation and a whole sex.

### What research have you done?

I started by reading *The Road to Wigan Pier* by George Orwell. It gave me a real insight into the working lives of the miners and the poverty of the coal industry. I also read a book called *Black Diamonds*, which is a true story about the Fitzwilliam family, who are actually mentioned in the play. They're an incredibly wealthy family who ran a large number of coalmines in the middle of the nineteenth century. The book gave me a real sense of what it was like to come from that kind of moneyed background, of how they lived day to day, and how their business was run – how it was affected by strikes and what their responsibilities were to the coal mining community.

I also have boxes and boxes of old letters from my own family's past, so I read some of those. I looked at ones from my great-grandfather, who I never knew, but his letters were sent just before the war, so they helped me to get a feel for the period.

### What is the biggest challenge in playing Harold?

Well, it's a massive part. And I don't normally worry about remembering lines but this play is so beautifully written that you have to be very precise when you're learning it. The way Harold talks is very structured. He strings his thoughts together in rather an impressive way, so that when he starts a sentence he knows where he's going to end up with it. These days we tend to 'umm' and 'ahh' and get there in a rather more roundabout way. I'm discovering that I can't really 'busk it'; if I drop a word it can mess up the whole meaning of the sentence.

And then once I've learnt the lines, getting my teeth around them is another thing – being nimble enough, I suppose. There won't be any rolling onstage without warming up!

### Have you worked with Shared Experience before? How does the Shared Experience process help you as an actor?

Yes, I've been directed by Nancy [Meckler] before, but other than that I don't have much experience of working in this way. It gives you the confidence to try exercises out – to trust them – and it's often later that you discover the ways in which they feed into a kind of sense memory. The improvisations and the physical exercises give the scene work an undercurrent.

# Interview with Tom Piper, Designer

## How did you begin to generate design ideas for *Bracken Moor*?

Well, I began by reading the script – that’s always helpful! Then I tend to do two kinds of research. The first kind is contextual, which for *Bracken Moor* meant investigating the period. I looked at photographs of landscapes in the north and of old English country houses. Both Polly [Teale] and Alexi [Kaye Campbell] were also feeding into this process with their own research and findings, so together we were developing a collective understanding of the specific and truthful look of the world.

The second kind of research I do is more about finding an atmosphere or a feeling for the design. In this case, I looked at some contemporary sculptors – a woman called Rachel Whitread, for instance, who makes big, imposing casts of houses – because there is a sense in the play of the Pritchards’ house being a kind of fortress, where Harold and Elizabeth have been holed up against the world. Another artist I looked at was Matta-Clark, who cuts buildings up and creates schisms in them, giving a sense of destruction which I thought might be useful in relation to the events in the play which challenge and, to an extent, deconstruct the Pritchards’ lives.

## What comes next in your process?

Then I created a storyboard for the entire play, which means going through the text, moment by moment, scene by scene, drawing out what happens with little stick figures. I don’t always storyboard, but for this particular production it was an incredibly useful process because it revealed to me the importance of entrances. There are a number of instances in the play where characters enter, initially unseen by others onstage, and overhear portions of dialogue. The design needed to facilitate those entrances in versatile and compelling ways.

## Is that how the staircase came about?

Yes, the staircase is interesting because it’s not actually in the script. It was something that we arrived at through lots of discussion. It offers an interesting space from which characters can watch and listen, without breaking up the stage in the way that a doorway might. There’s so much variety in a staircase – in how it’s used and in what it suggests. It creates a whole architecture offstage for the actors and audience to imagine – upstairs, downstairs, understairs... And there are of course many different interesting ways of going up and down a staircase!

## How did you decide on the level of naturalism for the design?

I think there’s always a danger with pieces set in the past that they become a bit ‘Downton Abbey’. What I mean is that you can easily get into period reconstruction and end up with lots of small details which clutter, rather than clarify, the world. When I drew up the storyboard, I realised that you really don’t *need* all that much to tell this story. So what we’ve tried to do is strip away as much as possible, creating ‘islands of naturalism’, as we’ve termed them, rather than an entirely naturalistic set. I’ve tried to find a way of suggesting the grandeur of the house without too much ‘dressing’. So the wealth of the house is implied through the parquet floor and the wood panelling on the walls, rather than ornate antiques and old paintings, which you might realistically find in that kind of house but which stretch far beyond our budget and which might well detract from the characters’ story.

## The most obviously non-naturalistic element of the set is the coal. How did that come about?

With the coal, I wanted to remind the audience that the Pritchards’ house is, in a sense, supported by that world – by the mining community – but that it’s also in danger of sinking back down into it. It’s a complex relationship. I found some amazing images of houses which had literally disintegrated and fallen into the coal mines that surround them. As the play goes on, more of the coal is revealed, giving a tension and a contrast between the world of the house and the world beyond it. There is, of course, always a temptation in design to over-illustrate the themes of the play, so a lot of our debate has been about how far the disintegration of the house and the reveal of the coal should go. I’ll only really find out when it’s all under light in a few weeks’ time!



## Design Images



Helen Schlesinger, Sarah Woodward, Joseph Timms, Simon Shepherd  
Photo: Tristram Kenton

# Lesson Plan

**Time:**

Approximately 50 minutes

**Learning Objectives:**

- Pupils should explore the status structure between Harold and Elizabeth at the end of the play, whilst examining character objectives and obstacles.

**Resources:**

- Gender Roles information sheet
- Scene Extract

**Warm up:**

In pairs, students name themselves A and B. A holds an open hand, fingers upward, about 2-3 inches from B's face. A then starts moving his/her hand about slowly, while B partner tries to keep his/her face at exactly the same distance from her hand. Try and move around the room in a controlled way. Switch roles after a couple of minutes. Discuss with the group how it felt being in control/being led.

**Activity:**

Students should read information sheet about Gender Roles in the 1930s.

Put students in groups of three and hand out Scene Extract.

Groups choose one person to play Elizabeth, one to play Harold and one to direct the scene.

Students should spend five minutes preparing a performance of the extract, considering the questions:

1. What do you think Elizabeth is feeling?
2. What do you think Harold is feeling?
3. Who do you think has the higher status?

Watch two or three performances and discuss the issues that arise between the couple.

What do we know about Elizabeth and Harold's life in the play and their roles in the 1930s that will affect this scene?

Who do pupils sympathise / identify with?

Who has the higher status?

Refresher: If necessary inform students that Elizabeth and Harold have been married for many years and their 12 year old son died 10 years ago.

**Layering the text - Objectives:**

After watching two or three performances of this scene, choose one group who have already performed to perform their work again.

Ask the group what they think an Objective is. Explain that it is something the character 'wants to achieve'.

Give the following objectives to the students playing Elizabeth and Harold and ask them to perform the scene again:

- Elizabeth wants to make Harold understand why she has to begin a new life.
- Harold wants to maintain whatever control he can over Elizabeth.

Ask the group what they think an Obstacle is.

Explain that it is something getting in the way of the character achieving their Objective.

Give the following Obstacles to the performers:

- Elizabeth's obstacle is her love for Harold.
- Harold's obstacle is the humiliation of being rejected.

Can the group think of anymore? With this added information, the pair then perform the extract again and the rest of the class have to comment on their performances.

**Questions for reflection / class discussion:**

- How have the actors changed how they perform the extract?
- Did the status of the two characters change when they were given their objectives/obstacles?
- Did it become more truthful when the objectives were introduced? What changed?

# Male and female roles information sheet

Harold and Elizabeth would have been brought up with very defined and limited ideas of appropriate male and female roles.

Harold is defined by his role as 'alpha male': high status, dominant and controlling over his wife and staff.

Elizabeth is just beginning to recognise her total dependence on her husband and the way that it has defined her life and choices.

As the play unfolds Elizabeth starts to question everything about her previous existence and realise that she must leave Harold if she is to take responsibility for her life.

Divorce was not common in the 1930s and divorced women were shunned by society and treated as outcasts. Many wives could not leave their husbands even if they wanted to, because they did not have the financial independence that was needed to survive. With these obstacles, many women were forced to stay in unhappy marriages.

It was not uncommon for middle- and upper-class boys, such as Geoffrey Avery, his son Terence and Harold Pritchard, to be sent to boarding school. Many boys were taken away from their mothers at just 7 years old. It was thought to be essential to sever the tie between mother and son in order to encourage independence and self-reliance in young men. Any expression of vulnerability or weakness was seen as dangerous and punished accordingly.



# Text extract

**ELIZABETH**

I don't know how long I'm going for Harold.

**HAROLD**

I see.

**Pause.**

**ELIZABETH**

Or if I'm even coming back.

**HAROLD**

Funny that. I too must be something of a psychic. I was almost certain you were going to say that.

**ELIZABETH**

Something's happened.

**HAROLD**

That's a bit of an understatement isn't it?

**Pause.**

**ELIZABETH**

Charlotte said I can stay at hers for as long as I like.

**HAROLD**

Why don't you stay at ours? I'll speak to Mrs. Greene and she can tidy the place up, it'll only take her a day or two.

**ELIZABETH**

I don't want to stay at your flat Harold.

**HAROLD**

*Our flat.*

**ELIZABETH**

*Your flat Harold. It's yours. Everything is yours.*

**HAROLD**

Anyway, your sister lives in two rooms and hasn't any money. You won't last a day.

**ELIZABETH**

I will.

# Exercises to take from the rehearsal room into the classroom

## Points of concentration

A point of concentration is something an actor can focus on throughout the playing of a scene. It could be a given circumstance (an event that has taken place in the hours, days, months or even years before, which in some way affects the present tense action of the play), or a person about whom the characters on stage are thinking. It could simply be the characters' relationship to the space in which a scene takes place. Throughout our rehearsals, we introduced different points of concentration for the actors, each of which contributed to layered characterisations and dynamic scene work.

## Classroom exercise:

Split the group into threes and ask them to think about the first exchange of the play between Harold and John Bailey. The two performers playing Harold and John should take as their point of concentration the mining community in the nearby village. This point of concentration will inevitably hold very different connotations for each character. For John, the community is made up of friends, family and fellow men. For Harold, it simply serves his business needs. Ask the two performers to improvise this scene once (text on page 23).

Now ask the remaining performer in the group to step into the scene and play the youngest daughter of miner Alfie Shaw (to whom John Bailey refers), thus making the point of concentration a physical presence in the room which both actors can see and refer to. The performer playing the daughter might tug on Harold's clothes, pleading and crying for food. They might attempt to embrace John Bailey for comfort and protection. The presence of this character will raise the stakes for both actors, probing their characters' consciences and fuelling their arguments.

At the end of the exercise, ask the groups to play the scene again without the third performer; although no longer present, her 'ghost' will hover over the exchange as the actors recall their interactions with her. Ask for responses from performers and share with the rest of the group.

## Improvising the immediate circumstances

There is a rich history behind every scene played out on stage. Shared Experience often choose to explore this history through improvisation, giving the actors the chance to experience physically some of the events that have shaped their characters and precipitated the moments written into the script.

During our rehearsals, we spent a morning improvising the period of time surrounding Edgar's disappearance, ten years before the action of the play begins. We looked at the first evening that Harold and Elizabeth waited for him, delaying dinner in the hope that he might return. We improvised their initial telephone call to the police, followed by the search of the garden, and then the wider scouring of the moors. This gave Helen Schlesinger, who plays Elizabeth, vivid images to take with her into the Act 1, Scene 1 exchange with Vanessa, during which she describes the details of her son's disappearance and ultimate death.

## Classroom exercise:

Ask the group to look at Act 2, Scene 1, when the Pritchards and the Averys return from the mine, cold and exhausted. Facilitate a discussion about what might have happened in the hours that have passed since the end of Act 1, Scene 2 (you can use the information in Eileen's speech at the beginning of Act 2 to help create an idea what happened on Bracken Moor).

Once you have come to a shared conception of the journey that the characters have made, set up short improvisations to explore moments within this journey. For example, you might want to ask each actor to improvise the individual act of getting dressed in preparation for the trip to Bracken Moor. You might then want to look at the moment they convene in the hallway. You could touch upon the journey to the mine, on foot through the windswept Yorkshire moors.

In each instance, give the group a clear idea of place (Where are they? What does it look like? How does it feel?), time (a conversation at 3am will feel very different to a conversation at 3pm), and objectives (what do the characters want at this particular moment?). These details will provide sufficient structure for clear, constructive improvisations which ought to aid the actors in their playing of the script's scenes.

## Text extract

### EILEEN

He turned as white as the whitest sheet when we were there and poor Mrs. Pritchard wailing like some sort of – well, like an animal Mr. Bailey if you'll forgive me for saying, like a trapped deer or something and the boy – that strange, haunted Mr. Avery, rolling on the floor down in the pit, his clothes covered in mud and his hair matted with it. They'd thrown down a rope ladder you see and they wanted me there so that I could help carry things and we all went down into the pit where the poor boy breathed his last all those years ago and it was as if we were descending into the bowels of the earth, as if we were entering hell itself.

### JOHN

That can't have been pleasant.

### EILEEN

Oh it wasn't Mr. Bailey, it wasn't, it wasn't and – *(she suddenly drops the cup and saucer she is holding and bursts into tears)* and I don't know what to do with myself Mr. Bailey, I don't know what to do but I can't stay in this house anymore even though I'd feel terrible for leaving them, especially poor Mrs. Pritchard who's like a ghost herself, wandering the corridors like a sleep-walker these last ten years, but I can't stay Mr. Bailey even though I have nowhere else to go and my mother and brothers to support but I can't stay, not after the things I've seen and heard and I haven't slept in three days and I think I'm losing my mind, I'm ever so frightened Mr. Bailey, ever so unhappy, but what can I do.

### JOHN

But did the boy say anything?

### EILEEN (trying to pull herself together)

Oh I do beg your pardon sir for making such a fuss and crying and all but I really am ever so unhappy.

### JOHN

Of course you are.

Pause.

### EILEEN

No, the boy didn't say a word Mr. Bailey, just rolled on the floor making these noises as if he were in the most terrible anguish and tearing his clothes off as if he was trying to escape his very own body, it makes me shiver just remembering it.

Pause.

So they've covered him in a blanket and are carrying him home now with Mrs. Pritchard walking in their wake asking him all the time 'what is it that you need me to know Edgar, what is it that you need me to know' but the boy not saying a word just rolling his head around like someone who's lost their mind for good. But they sent me ahead so that I could light the fire and make some tea for them, God knows they'll need it after hours in that cold, damp place.