

The Contributors / Les contributeurs

The alacrity with which those who were invited to contribute to the volume of essays in Brian's honour agreed to do so attests to the affection and respect all have for him. Many have known him for years: Jeanette Beer mentions "about forty years," Bill Calin says that "Brian and I go back a long ways — decades." Glynnis Cropp was a post-graduate student with Brian at the Sorbonne in the 1960s, and Bob Taylor was called to Victoria College in the same year as Brian in 1964.

Many know him through long-term professional associations and common interests. Tony Hunt mentions that he and Brian first met many years ago in London; they have subsequently maintained contact through the Anglo-Norman Text Society, for which Brian acted as the North American Treasurer. Editing texts and studying works of medieval lexicography have been common interests. Jeanette speaks of many conferences in the late sixties or early seventies in the United States or Canada where their common interest in medieval French language and literature brought them together; for Glynnis, research in medieval language and literature has been a continuous link between her and Brian, and has given them opportunities to meet from time to time in Paris or New Zealand; and David Trotter explains his association with Brian as "primarily as a colleague and friend working in a field closely related to one of Brian's main interests. We have met at conferences in Europe and Canada, corresponded, and exchanged ideas, and had a lot of fun doing it." Carol Harvey, too, has delighted in Brian's wisdom and his warmth at many conferences over the years. A particular highlight was his bilingual keynote address at the meeting of the Canadian Society of Medievalists / Société canadienne des médiévistes at Dalhousie University, Halifax, in 2003, during her term as President of the CSM/SCM.

Some contributors first met Brian in his role of teacher of Anglo-Norman at the University of Toronto. Wendy Pfeffer says that she took Anglo-Norman with Brian in her second year at UofT, and has considered him a friend ever since. “He was always ready to offer advice and encouragement to help me with my doctoral research, encouragement that has continued to this day. Everything I know about Anglo-Norman, and much that I know about French linguistics, I owe to him.” Other former students, some now colleagues, also speak very highly of his help. Delbert Russell writes, “I first met him as an examiner for Ph.D. comprehensive exams in Toronto in the early 70s; he was also a member of my thesis committee, from whom I learned editorial skills. He was interested in one of my research projects on medieval French words found in quotations in the *OED*, and I invited him to visit the *OED* project at Waterloo. I like to think this in part led to his later work on dictionaries. He has also been a collegial supporter of my research efforts over the years.” Margaret Burrell speaks of his support of interdisciplinary research: “little did Brian know when I became a student at the Centre for Medieval Studies at Toronto that I might pursue the unlikely combination of disciplines in my contribution; Brian . . . encouraged such investigations as a point of intellectual curiosity.” Even those who were not taking courses with Brian appreciated his qualities. Randall Rosenfeld, a graduate student in the late 1980s, recalls, “He was quietly friendly, and it surprised me that he could remember my name, even though I was not studying Anglo-Norman French, and he was a big university administrator. He always expressed interest in what I was doing.” Similarly, Lys Ann [Shore] Weiss says that although she did not have the opportunity to take a course with Professor Merrilees during her graduate studies, she was well aware of his important work in Anglo-Norman French language and linguistics.

Brian’s identity as a caring friend, a committed grandfather, and a devoted family man who, in partnership with Pat, has provided hospitality for many of the contributors, has also drawn comment. Bill says that Brian and Pat “look after me during my research stays in Toronto, for which I am eternally grateful.” Margaret alludes to the reciprocal family visits when she speaks of her contribution as a “tribute to the subsequent mutual meetings of our families. She adds, “this is a salute to Brian from me, from the Laird household, and from the ‘other’ major South Island New Zealand university, the one he didn’t attend.” Jeanette speaks of recent years when, “On a more personal level, I have once or twice stayed with Pat and his daughters, and they in turn have spent a vacation in our house at the New Jersey shore. These days our most frequent topic of conversation is our role as new grandparents. Would that all academic associations were as agreeable!”

What is apparent from the notes and anecdotes from the contributors is the affection, regard, professional respect, admiration, and thorough enjoyment of Brian Merrilees as a decent Kiwi (with some French and Canadian influences). As Bob Taylor so aptly says, “Over the years of his career, Brian has demonstrated many and varied talents, as an administrator, teacher, researcher, and loyal Victorian, but I must admit that I find him even more admirable as a family man, a golfer (from afar), and a caring friend.”

Un ami de vieille date partage en ces termes ses rapports avec Brian : « Je ne sais à quand remonte ma première conversation avec Brian », dit Serge Lusignan. « Depuis, nous partageons une amitié que les juristes médiévaux qualifieraient de coutumière, c’est-à-dire aussi ancienne qu’il n’est mémoire. Elle est faite de discussions sur l’anglo-normand, les dictionnaires, la politique et les mérites des vins néozélandais ».

Pour tous les collègues de Brian, les relations professionnelles sont soudées par sa chaleur amicale. Anne Grondeux a rencontré Brian pour la première fois en 1990, lorsque Jacques Monfrin les a réunis pour une publication commune. « De cette collaboration est née une amitié durable et fidèle, dans laquelle se sont inscrits de nouveaux projets », dit-elle. Et cette collaboration continue encore aujourd’hui, puisqu’ils éditent ensemble le Glossaire contenu dans le MS Paris, BNF lat. 4120. Un travail commun avec Pierre Nobel de l’Université Marc Bloch de Strasbourg a non seulement donné lieu à des publications de premier plan mais aussi à une amitié durable. « Une amitié fidèle me lie à Brian depuis fort longtemps. Elle fut scellée par un séjour à Toronto et un accueil dans sa famille, il y a douze ans. Le couple est aussi venu résider à Strasbourg pendant quelques semaines . . . Échanges professionnelles et relations amicales sont donc étroitement imbriqués », dit-il. Collègues francophones ou anglophones, c’est pareil: les collaborateurs de Brian deviennent vite ses amis et ils sont souvent accueillis à Toronto par le couple Merrilees.

Par ailleurs, tous sont unanimes à louer son érudition et son expertise dans l’édition des textes. Et s’il a commencé sa carrière sous le signe du manuscrit rédigé laborieusement à la main ou au mieux à la machine à taper, il a toujours su se tenir à la page pour profiter de la technologie la plus récente. Pierre Kunstmann fait remarquer les capacités d’adaptation de Brian, tout en louant son expertise en son domaine de recherche : « De l’édition de textes anglo-normands jadis à l’établissement de corpus électroniques récemment, j’ai toujours pu compter sur le modèle, les conseils et l’amitié fidèle de Brian Merrilees ». Pour Pierre Nobel aussi, qui a édité un glossaire latin-français avec Brian et dirigé une thèse en cotutelle, l’érudition de Brian est précieuse. Et il met le

doigt sur une autre qualité de Brian, l'empressement avec lequel il partage ses connaissances: « Brian Merrilees et son collaborateur William Edwards ont toujours manifesté la plus grande disponibilité à fournir des renseignements concernant d'autres recherches dans lesquelles je me suis engagé ». Pour sa part, Giuseppe Di Stefano a reconnu ces mêmes mérites en l'invitant aux colloques qu'il organise sur le moyen français à l'Université McGill et en publiant ses travaux dans les *Actes* de ces journées d'étude.

Laissons le dernier mot à un autre ami de vieille date, Pierre Kunstmann. Il exprime avec sincérité les sentiments d'admiration et d'amitié de tous ceux qui ont contribué de près ou de loin à ce volume de *Mélanges*, « Je suis heureux de pouvoir lui rendre hommage à cette occasion ».

Margaret Burrell and Carol J. Harvey

