

4: Interlude: Oxford and Biddesden House

Unfortunately, the Lady Margaret Hall was not one of the lovely old colleges that line the narrow, winding streets of Oxford. Away from them and in its own grounds, it was an unremarkable bright red-bricked building of a much later period and looked like a typical school inside.



The Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford

I cycled from the youth hostel on the Monday morning and arrived at the college by about 10.30. A young female student showed me up to a comfortable bedroom that contained everything that I would need. The first thing I did was wash a pile of dirty clothes that I had accumulated in my bag, and hung them up to dry in the nearby bathroom. After I had written my diary, I went off to explore the place. I found the registry office and paid the girl most of what I owed her – I would change some more money later. I then followed some people into the dining room and sat down with some pleasant English ladies to eat lunch.

At two o'clock we assembled in the garden outside for a group photograph and later convened in the lecture hall for a short opening address by the Right Honourable The Baroness Vickers of Devonport, President of the Europe-China Association. This was followed by remarks and instructions from the chairman, Hugh Baker. Then came our first lecture by Michael Loewe: a comparison of Chinese and Western cultures. This was a rather wordy and formal affair that lulled most of the older people to sleep, especially as the room was warm and many of them had not recovered from their lunch.

Afternoon tea followed, during which I chatted briefly with the Baroness, a pleasant and friendly elderly lady. Then came the second lecture: The Classical Works of Chinese Literature, delivered by Tilemann Grimm, which was interesting, concise and to the point. Various half-forgotten pieces of information, which I had learned some time previously, came flooding back.

Following this, we had an outdoor demonstration of *Tai Ji Chuan* or shadow-boxing, given by two American young ladies who had come to teach it. (I, in fact, had

learned some of it in Dublin before I went to China.) This took place in the quad, where it was sunny. Afterwards we had our first calligraphy lesson, in which we did nothing but learn about care of the brush. I was horrified to discover that the equipment and paper to be used would cost £11 and that what I had brought was of no use. Through ignorance, I had more or less ruined my brushes – or so I was told.

We finally sat down for dinner at seven; I was not really ready for this as I was now not taking any vigorous exercise. Afterwards I went off for a walk to the town centre, then returned to see a fireworks display at ten o'clock. This, in fact, was a dismal failure and all we saw was one cartwheel, which, after a few seconds, fell to the ground. I left again, somewhat annoyed, and cycled back to Merton College, where I managed to gate-crash the second half of *Twelfth Night*, thereby taking it up from the point where I had left it yesterday evening and seeing it through to the end. It turned out that I had not missed a great deal, but I was glad to have seen the rest of the play. Back at the college, I wrote my diary and finally went to bed.

The following four days (Tuesday to Friday) more or less followed a set pattern: each day began with a session of gentle *Tai Ji* movements outdoors (weather permitting), before breakfast. It turned out that the young lady who taught us knew my instructor in Dublin. After breakfast we practised calligraphy with varying degrees of success – my efforts were rather shaky. A lecture then followed, and after a coffee break, another lecture. Before lunch we had more *Tai Ji* and calligraphy.

In the afternoons, we had two more lectures, separated by a welcome tea break. Dinner was served afterwards and, on most evenings, we were either free to do whatever we wanted or attend some type of entertainment in the college.

The various lectures were of differing quality: some were very interesting and stimulating, whereas others were academic and often tedious. One, delivered in a thick German accent, was almost unintelligible. Subjects included Chinese literature, landscape painting, poetry, music, Peking Opera and its costumes, shadow puppet shows, ritual bronze and jade artefacts, ceramic art, architecture and fireworks. The worst item, in everyone's opinion, was a sort of cabaret performance called 'All Arts are Indivisible', given by a very conceited Chinese lady who shall remain nameless. Her paintings, dancing and commentary proved to be excruciating and in very bad taste. The best one, for me at least, was about Chinese music. This was given by a young Chinese man from Pittsburgh, appropriately named Bell Yung. Instead of trying to talk about everything, he wisely decided to concentrate on one aspect and delivered a fascinating treatise on the ancient *qin* (pronounced 'chin') – a type of zither used for 'art' music. After he had explained the instrument, its music and notation, he performed a wonderfully expressive piece that held everybody's attention and received an appreciative round of applause.

After this lecture, which was given on the Wednesday afternoon, I skipped the *Tai Ji* lesson, chatted to Mr Yung and set up a 16 mm ciné projector and loudspeakers for Barbara Findorff of the Europe-China Association. When word got around that I worked in the television section of our national broadcaster, it was assumed that muggins would know all about projectors. I was familiar with the small domestic 8 mm projector, as I owned one myself, but had no experience of working with its big brother. Nevertheless I rigged it up to the best of my ability and managed to get the beast working. It was used in conjunction with a slide projector (which I also set up and operated) for the lecture on Peking Opera. As the event went smoothly, without a hitch, I was thanked afterwards for my contribution and received a round of applause.

Directly following this was an unscheduled talk on the famous 'Admonitions' scroll in the British Museum, delivered by one of the museum's curators. Once again, the slide projector and my assistance were needed. Afterwards, I put everything away, helped some of the others prepare for the shadow puppet show in the evening and sat down for dinner. During the meal, Barbara Findorff kindly presented me with a bottle of gin for my help and told me that she would send for me in two years' time to help her with the next summer school. I wondered what on earth I would do with the bottle of gin; luckily one of the Irish contingent offered to bring it back to Dublin for me.

The shadow puppet event began with a lecture, illustrated with more slides, which I loaded for the occasion. Then came the actual performance, given by some of the students who had been practising during the week. Our calligraphy teacher Mr Han provided incidental music on a variety of percussion and melodic instruments: drums, cymbals, a gong, a wooden fish, a Chinese fiddle and a flute. At the end of the short sketch, the puppeteers were loudly applauded and cheered. Afterwards, when most people had adjourned to the bar, I went out for a long, vigorous walk.

On the following day we were given a lecture that very much appealed to me: 'Chinese Architecture: From Palaces and Pagodas to the Courtyard House', given by Frances Wood of the British Library and illustrated with slides. As well as setting up the projector and loading the slides, I took lots of notes.

We then left for the Bodleian Library in the town centre. As I was with the second group and had time to spare, I bought a map of Southern England in Fyffe's bookshop, sent off a postcard, and tried to find out about B&I ferries to France, but strangely nobody was able to give me any information. On my way to the library, I passed a shop that sold antique pianos and a harpsichord made by David Leigh, whose concert I had planned to attend this very evening.

I joined our group and entered the famous library. We were only brought into one of the elegant rooms of the Old Bodleian, but our excellent young guide gave us a history of the place in general and showed us some of the priceless Chinese books in the collection, which he had arranged on long tables. It was a great thrill to be able to handle these wonderful books, many of which contained illustrations. Several had been inspired or commissioned by the Jesuits, and one of them was a treatise on Western perspective.

Afterwards, instead of returning to the college, Joan (one of the Irish ladies) and I had an excellent meal in a nearby restaurant and afterwards walked to the Holywell Music Room (the oldest concert hall in Europe, we were told). Here we attended a most interesting and enjoyable recital given by David Leigh on a fortepiano made in 1786 by Robert Stodart, which he himself had restored. The wooden-framed instrument had a light quality of sound that perfectly suited the music performed on it: pieces by Mozart, Haydn, Clementi and Beethoven. He was rewarded with enthusiastic applause, resulting in two encores. The atmosphere in the lovely hall was very pleasant and people were dressed in their summer clothes.

I had the pleasure of talking to David afterwards; I complimented him and asked him about the piano. He told me that almost everything was original and that he had spent three months restoring it.

Joan and I walked back to the college together, and went around the back to a modern apartment building, where we joined another Irish lady, Catherine, and a visiting American professor of microbiology, who had befriended Joan and Catherine. He poured us glasses of wine or brandy and we chatted until it was time for bed.

On our last day we were brought to the Ashmolean Museum for a guided tour during the morning. I arrived a little late as I had left earlier on my bicycle to cash a

traveller's cheque in the bank, where I had to join a long queue. I missed part of the introduction but that did not matter too much, for I found it easier to see things for myself rather than remain with the group. I was delighted with the collection of ceramics.

I did a little packing after lunch, then rested before our final lecture, which was about Chinese fireworks. This was such a long-winded, technical speech, delivered at breakneck speed, that everyone quickly lost interest and either fell asleep or began to fidget. I dozed off for a while, then began looking at some books for sale at the back of the hall, where I was sitting.

The dreadful lecture finally ended and Barbara Findorff gave her farewell speech, thanking everyone in turn. I was thanked again and received a round of applause. It was then announced that Lady Vickers had cancelled the usual tea break and had replaced it with drinks on the lawn. We ambled outside, into the sunshine, where we sipped wine or orange juice. A raffle was held and a lucky young Swiss lady won a two-week holiday in China. Lady Vickers thanked everyone for participating and we set about photographing each other. It was a lovely way to finish such an enjoyable course, which had been held in such a friendly and informal atmosphere.



The Irish contingent at the Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford

When it was all over, people dispersed and the house and grounds fell silent. I was a little sad that it had all come to an end so soon, even though some of the lectures in the course had been far from perfect. I retired to my room, as I had booked to stay one more night, and after I had rested I walked into town through the park.

As I had decided to see *The Provok'd Wife*, a Restoration comedy written by Sir John Vanbrugh in 1697, at the Oxford Union in St Michael's Street this evening, I found my way to a marquee, where one could have a meal. However, as the prices were a little high and a noisy jazz band was playing, I went to a nearby restaurant called 'The Nosebag' and sat down to a light supper. Some Belgians who had been at the course joined me and we chatted until I left for the play.

The 'theatre' was simply an old building in which raised seating had been installed – there was no stage as such. The performance, which began at 7.30 p.m., was excellent: it was quite crazy and very funny. A couple of deliberate anachronisms, such as a modern-day narrator who also provided a musical accompaniment on a tuba

and trumpet, made it even more banal and added to the general effect. The actors played their parts very well and received an enthusiastic response from the audience. Although it was a rather noisy affair, I enjoyed it immensely. During the interval we wandered out to the garden, where food and drink were still available and the jazz band played. A long, enthusiastic round of applause brought the play to an end and I returned to the college for a welcome shower before bed.

The following morning, the day of my departure, was depressingly gloomy: the sky was cloudy and the air was full of rain. I treated myself to a good lie-in, then went outside to do some *Tai Ji*. Inside again, I sat down for breakfast with some of the people who had been on the course and had not yet left. When I did leave, I wished Barbara Findorff goodbye; she thanked me again for my help and embraced me. After I had bid farewell to the others, I jumped on my bike and headed off. Fortunately the rain had stopped by now and it had begun to clear up.

It took me some time to make my way out of Oxford's suburbs, but I was soon travelling southwards towards Abingdon on the main road. I stopped briefly to admire the fine classical buildings in the town square and pop into the tourist information centre, then left. Again, I followed the main road southwards through Drayton and Steventon, mingling with the weekend traffic. I surmised that many of the cars contained people heading for the sea ports before a threatened ferry strike took place; if it did, it would scupper my plans to travel to France.

I eventually managed to turn off the main road at Beedon, and so, keeping to the quieter country roads, I passed through the villages of World's End and Chieveley. It was such a relief to be back in the countryside once again, where all was quiet and the air was fresh. The sun began to peep out from behind the clouds and it became hot.

I cycled under the motorway to Winterbourne, a fine village, and then came to the heavenly village of Boxford. I was stopped in my tracks by the appearance of two beautiful old houses with steep black thatched roofs and neat gardens bright with flowers. I jumped off the bicycle to take a photograph and pushed it as I walked around admiring the village. Just down the road was another pretty corner with two similar houses and gardens. A river ran under a bridge and gurgled loudly beside the right-hand house as though it had been turning a millwheel. Beyond were willow trees and a landscaped garden. This was indeed heaven on earth: the little village was blissfully peaceful. I stood, enraptured by my surroundings, and was reluctant to leave. I pushed aside my rush towards a ferry port – I would get to France by and by. I decided that I was here to enjoy myself and enjoy myself I would.

I lingered a little longer, dragged myself away and stopped at a nearby pub, where I ordered the traditional lunch of a ploughman's salad (*ooh-aar!*) and a glass of lager. Rested and refreshed, I resumed my journey, avoiding Newbury, and made my way down to the River Kennet, where the scenery became astonishingly beautiful. I paused at the bridge over the river to admire the fine view and drink in the peaceful atmosphere. Below me were mallard ducks swimming lazily in the water and basking in the warm sun.

I set off again; now south of the river I cycled through pretty little hamlets that were not marked on my map. I slowed down to admire superb old buildings, many of them thatched and built in a style that I had not yet seen on my journey. The region looked very prosperous, and here and there I spotted some fine classical country houses. Most of the buildings here were constructed of red brick and all of them appeared to be in excellent condition.

Enchanted, I slowed down, cycling in the direction of Andover, where the Guinnesses who lived in Knockmaroon just outside Dublin had a country home. My father had encouraged me to telephone and visit them. As I had the phone number, I stopped at a red telephone box in the village of Ashmansworth and dialled the number. An unfamiliar voice said, 'Hello'. I guessed that the speaker must have been a butler or housekeeper. I explained who I was and what I was doing, and I was told to wait a moment. After a short pause, I heard a familiar soft voice, which occasionally sank into a mumble, greeting me: it was Bryan Guinness, known to ordinary mortals like me by his title, Lord Moyne.

'Oh, hello Charles! So you're on a cycling trip through England?'

'That's correct, Lord Moyne.'

'That's wonderful! Well, do come for supper – and you're very welcome to stay overnight if you wish.'

'Thank you very much – you're very kind.'

'Do you know how to get here?'

'Well, I have a map here...'

The conversation ended with him giving me directions and asking me to be at his home by seven or any time earlier this evening. I was delighted to have received the invitation. As I had plenty of time at my disposal, I went off exploring the surrounding countryside and the fascinating villages. I headed across to Faccombe, then to Linkenholt, and after receiving directions from a chatty elderly couple who were out walking, I continued over the hills to the twin hamlets of Lower and Upper Chute. The people here, I noticed, were very friendly indeed. I was now in a state of ecstasy, though by now this was being slightly dampened by a growing feeling of exhaustion. It was hot work pushing up the hills, while sweating and beating off flies, but the effort was worth it.



Picture postcard of Biddesden House, near Andover

At last I hurtled downhill from Upper Chute and arrived at Biddesden. I immediately recognised the fine old Queen Anne house from a photograph that I had seen of it. I stopped to photograph it and continued to the front door, which, in true Guinness style, was wide open. From outside I could see that the hall was full of pictures and lots of colourful bric-à-brac. I sat down to draw my breath and trace out my route on the map in pencil and then entered. As I could find nobody about, I

shouted, ‘Hello! Is there anybody at home?’ and after a short pause, the man I had spoken to on the phone appeared. He kindly gave me a cool and welcoming glass of lime water and was just showing me to a loo when one of Lord Moyne’s daughters, Tamsy, appeared. She greeted me, introduced me to her lively young son Luke and conducted me upstairs to a bathroom, where I washed myself and some dirty clothes. When I hung them outside on the clothes line, Tamsy appeared again and brought me off to see the colourful garden and the swimming pool. I was interested to see the pavilion beside it, which had been decorated by the artist Roland Pym (who had illustrated some of Bryan’s books, including *A Fugue of Cinderellas*) and the Russian mosaicist Boris Anrep. I was then shown some of the many horses owned by the family.

Back at the house, various people and members of the family began to arrive back from a horse show. I met Mirabel (with whom I had played when we first moved to Knockmaroon in 1964), Fiona, Finn, Catriona, Lady Moyne and three guests: two girls, Cat and Alex, and a Belgian lady from Waterloo named Milou. Cat, a vivacious young lady, presented me with a bottle of Guinness, invited me to play croquet with her, then disappeared upstairs for a bath. When she reappeared, it was time for supper and, thankfully, the croquet things could not be found. (I say ‘thankfully’ because I had no idea of how to play croquet!)

We now assembled in the exquisite dining room with its decorative chairs, where I found and admired the Pissarro painting that my father had told me about, and sat down to an excellent meal. Conversation was lively, and Bryan was in a good mood, laughing and joking with all of us. However, whenever his words were inaudible, Lady Moyne checked him with a terse, ‘Bryan, do stop mumbling’ or ‘Bryan, we can’t hear you – you’re mumbling’.

After coffee, Tamsy approached me again and kindly brought me on a conducted tour of the house, showing me all the works of art that it contained. I admired the collection of George Chinnery paintings and sketches, the Jack B. Yates works, and the paintings by Henry Lamb, including his excellent portraits in the library of Bryan Guinness and Evelyn Waugh (the author of *Brideshead Revisited* and other novels). It was just as well that Tamsy brought me around, for I would have lost my way. In true Guinness style, things were tossed about here and there, which gave the house a pleasantly informal, lived-in feeling.

Downstairs again, we discovered that it was almost eleven o’clock, and entered a room where Bryan was watching a play on television. He turned it off when we came in and set about switching off all the lights. We then wished each other goodnight and went up to bed; I had been given Kieran’s room in the attic. I selected one of Bryan’s books from a shelf, *Leo and Rosabelle*, read a little and finally turned off the bedside light. It had been a most enjoyable day – perhaps one of the best so far.

I awoke next morning in my cosy attic bedroom, with its classical red wallpaper and piles of good books. A gentle perfume wafted from a vase full sweet peas that had been placed on a desk. I rose at about half past seven, went out into the narrow corridor and into the bathroom for my morning ablutions. Downstairs, I joined Lady Moyne and Milou for breakfast. We had an interesting conversation that was stopped abruptly by Lord Moyne’s arrival. He pressed me to a bowl of home-made yogurt after I had eaten my cereal. On returning to my bedroom, I discovered that Rhoda, the Welsh maid who had worked in Knockmaroon, had made my bed.

Downstairs again, I sat in the hall, reading more of the book that I had started the previous night; it was written in much the same style as Bryan’s *Fugue of Cinderellas*,

a copy of which we had at home. In time, the thick mist outside began to lift and the sun shone. I went out to take a walk and found Lord Moyne sitting on a bench, reading the morning paper. I walked down to the road, turned towards nearby Ludgershall and ambled along until I found a footpath. As the road was proving to be uninteresting, I decided to take the path. On my way I met a man who was out walking his dog, and we stopped to talk. Like other people that I had met in the vicinity, he was very friendly. He told me that his name was Connolly and he was interested to hear that I came from Dublin. He gave me directions for returning to Biddesden and we parted.

I continued along the path, admiring the ordered fields of hay and the nearby hills. The sun shone brightly, butterflies flitted around me and brightly-coloured shrubs grew in the hedgerows. It was a truly idyllic scene. Following the narrow path, which I had all to myself, I made my way round in a circle and finally joined the main road to Biddesden and the two Chute hamlets. I was back within an hour.

At the house I met Tamsy, and, after we had looked at the bantam cocks and fowl, we walked to the farmyard with her son Luke to have a look at a cowshed that needed cleaning, but finding it occupied and the task rather daunting, we tackled a horse stable instead. We set to, shovelling out the dung and old straw. Needless to say, at the end of this job I felt quite hot and sweaty.

Although it was now lunchtime, I was nabbed by some of the others in order to help them move some horses and so I went off with them in a little motorized buggy. The horses, which were in a nearby field, were successfully shifted into another one, but, thankfully, without my assistance – just as well, as I knew nothing about horses.

I returned to the house with Milou and Cat, and arrived for lunch, which we ate outdoors, sitting at a table in the garden. By now, another daughter, Rosaleen, had arrived with her Indian husband Sudhir Mulji.

Feeling rather drowsy by now from the heat and the good food (chicken, potatoes and vegetables, followed by a summer pudding), I retired to the sofa in the hall, where I put up my feet and continued reading. I rested until three o'clock, when I was called upon to help move some cows into a different field. Off we set again in the little buggy. The operation was simple enough in principle, but it proved to be somewhat more complicated. When the cows were let out of the field onto the road, a dog barked in the garden of a nearby house, the cows panicked and went scampering off in the opposite direction and up another road. A mad rush began. As everybody was now behind the cows, there was no way of stopping them and turning them back. Mirabel, Cat and I went whizzing and bumping across a field in the buggy to get ahead of them. This we succeeded in doing, just in the nick of time, and shooed them back. At first everything went well. However, as an open gate had not been closed by the people who were now at the front of the herd, the cows ran into and scampered around a field of wheat.

We finally managed to round them up, get them out and down the road to where we had started. The troublesome dog was pacified and at last we got the cattle into the correct field.

We returned to the house and set off to move some horses. We all took one each and brought them to the stables to give them de-worming pellets and to spray them against midges. The foals also had to be treated; they proved to be more difficult to handle. We then set off to lead them to another field. The horse I had been given suddenly decided to lead *me*, and I was pulled through rows of nettles, which, because I was only wearing light sandals and no socks, stung me horribly. The horse then

jostled me roughly, pushed me off balance and stood heavily on both my feet, which made me roar with pain. Finn took the reins until I recovered.

Out on the road, all went smoothly until my frisky horse wheeled around; fortunately the only casualty this time was one of my sandals, which was wrenched off my foot. Mirabel, who came up behind me in the buggy, took over. Thankfully I climbed into the buggy and drove for the rest of the journey – at a snail's pace. Undoubtedly Mirabel had remembered that I had shown little or no interest in horses many years previously when we had played together in Knockmaroon.

After the horses were safely led into an adjacent field, I brought Finn on a drive around it so that he could inspect the hedges. After this, the others piled in and we drove back to the house. I immediately went upstairs, had a welcome bath and rubbed cream on my feet, which fortunately had recovered by now.

Downstairs again, I had some afternoon tea and a scone in the hall. The others went off to go riding and I returned to my book. Later, Lord Moyne returned with a pleasant elderly lady who had painted portraits of all the children, Mrs Joan Cocheme. Lord Moyne left us together and we had a long and very interesting conversation. Her maiden name had been Joan Souter-Robinson and she had been born in India. She married Jacques Cocheme, a Frenchman from Mauritius, in 1936. The couple had travelled to far-flung places such as Syria, the Sudan, Kenya and Italy. She told me about her long and fascinating painting career and an exhibition in London that she had just opened. Eighty years of age, she looked twenty years younger and was full of energy and good humour. She had an excellent attitude to life and did just what she liked. Although she accepted things as they were, she could not understand the lack of taste and appreciation of good things by the younger generation. As I had admired her paintings in the house, I had been keen to meet her.

After our conversation, I sat outside reading and, at eight o'clock, two young ladies and two young men arrived for supper. As nothing seemed to be happening, we fell into conversation, ambled up to the garden and swimming pool, and then returned to the house. At this point a bell was rung, followed by the welcoming sound of the dinner gong. We entered the dining room for our meal at nine. This time almost every seat around the long pale blue table was taken. We began with soup, then helped ourselves to rice, chicken, vegetables and lettuce; one of the wooden bowls containing lettuce was reserved exclusively for Lord Moyne, for it contained his 'special' salad dressing. Conversation was loud and lively; Lord Moyne, with the two girls on either side of him, was once again in a merry mood. Dessert consisted of apple pie and cream.

After supper, Lord Moyne suggested that we move to another room, but most of the guests drifted elsewhere. I remained in the hall, listening to the ladies chatter after Lord Moyne had gone to bed, wished Cat and Alex goodbye as they would be leaving early on the following morning, and then went to bed. Sitting at the desk by the vase of sweet peas, I wrote my diary in blissful silence. Despite the events during the afternoon, it had been an enjoyable day, though I looked forward to my onward journey tomorrow.

I slept well and awoke refreshed soon after seven on the following morning. When I went down for breakfast at eight, nobody else was about. However, Finn appeared and we helped ourselves to food. I ate well, beginning with a bowl of crunchy cereal and yogurt. We were joined by Lord and Lady Moyne; breakfast continued in almost total silence until Milou arrived and livened things up a little.

Breakfast over, I returned to my room in order to get ready. When I went downstairs with my luggage, Lord Moyne said that he wished I would stay longer and asked me to sign the visitors' book. This I did, adding cartoon sketches of myself arriving at Biddesden and leaving for Venice. Back in the hall, Lord Moyne appeared with some Chinese scrolls that he had taken from a drawer to show me; he had bought them in China in 1935. Although they were rather modern in style, they looked quite elegant.

Having looked at these, Lord Moyne went off in search of somebody to make sandwiches for me, but having failed to do this, reappeared with a very large bar of Swiss chocolate. Then, encouraged by Mirabel, I went with her to the kitchen, where we made some sandwiches. I took an apple, filled my bottle with orange juice and prepared to leave. I was sorry to leave, but not sorry to escape the horses, cattle and farm work. All I had missed was 'Puss' (Fiona's nickname on account of her love of cats) playing her Northumbrian bagpipes for me.

Even though I now had a packed lunch, Lord Moyne insisted that I take the chocolate, so to pacify him, I did. I bid him and the others farewell, and I was urged to come again. Milou gave me her address in Belgium and, when somebody apologised for the accident with the horse yesterday, Mirabel spoke on my behalf and said, 'Charles has had enough of horses – he never wants to see another horse again!'

I cycled to the stables to say goodbye to Lady Moyne and Tamsy, then set off along the road. By now the mist had cleared and the sun was shining. When I spotted Mr Connolly and his dog, I stopped to greet him. As he was in the mood for a chat, we spent a good half hour talking about the Guinnesses, whom he praised for their work and help in the community. As I was afraid of the bar of chocolate melting in the heat, I gave it to him. I then bid him adieu, threw my leg over the crossbar and continued my journey south-westwards, in the direction of Salisbury.

Note: While staying at Biddesden, Lady Moyne, who was aware that I was writing a diary, requested a copy of it. When I finally returned home, I typed her a shortened and edited version of what I had written, had it bound and sent to her. She later wrote to me from her sister-in-law's house in Scotland: 'Dear Charles, how very kind of you to send me your *Destination Venice*. I have enjoyed it enormously and I am full of admiration. You have done something really worthwhile which you will never forget all your life. ...Elisabeth Moyne.'