

Visit to China 1986 August 27th – Sept 26th

Letters to wife Libby and boys Clive(6) and Hugh (4)

Background: This was partly a thank you from Prof Zhou for me agreeing that he could translate my book Biochemistry of Methyloprophs. This was at a meeting in America. I had also invited a young Chinese scientist from Warwick (Wei-Ping Liu), now working in Shanghai, to give a talk and he was also involved in setting up the visit. Funded by The Royal Society in an exchange agreement with the equivalent Academia Sinica. I flew to Beijing then down to Shanghai then for the main part of my visit to Chendu in Sichuan. During that visit I was taken up to Juizhaigou in the mountains.



30th Aug. Fudan University Shanghai.

At last I have some time to write this. At Heathrow there was a huge queue so 10 minutes before my flight was due I was still in passport control. Everyone was in the same position so it was not too worrying. I went to the listed gate to find that it had changed so had a hectic rush to the right one. No problem the plane was an hour late. Usual problem on a Wednesday I was told!?? Flight was the usual pattern: food, Rome; food Bahrein; food, Hong Kong. My plane companions were 2 nice elderly Australians from Melbourne. From the air Hong Kong looked beautiful but the airport was a mess. The HK to Beijing plane was almost empty. I found I was in the same plane as Prof Norman Maclean (Biology Southampton) and his wife. Beijing airport was very clean and well organised. We were met by Academia Sinica reps who took us all to the Friendship Hotel. My flight to Shanghai was cancelled because of the worst typhoon to hit Shanghai for 15 years. I had a three room suite in the hotel build by the Russians in the '50s in an export push. Had a lovely dinner with Norman and Jean then we wandered in hot humid area around the hotel. I had a good sleep but woke at 5.30 am.

My plane didn't leave till evening so I had a free day in Beijing. Liu from the Academy took me by car out to a summer palace by a beautiful lake and surrounding hills created from the earth removed to make the lake. It was very crowded with Chinese tourists. We clambered up thousands of steps to look at temples etc. Lu knew nothing about them, just waddling about pointing at self evident tigers and elephants. We went down a back way which was cool through rocks and trees. I saw only one bird – a house sparrow. We went back to lunch (me alone). I picked up a menu, wondering what small item to choose. I gave my room number to the waiter who took away the menu without a word from either of us. He ignored the menu and brought a lovely lunch of rice and 6 small dishes of unidentified chinese stuff. I had a nice short chat with an Indian who was friends with the Head of Zoology at Madurai last year (Dr Krishnaswamy). I discovered a swimming pool and paid to swim and lounge for an hour. Then off to central Beijing with Lu. I persuaded him to leave me for 3 hours locating a place to meet up on a map I gave him in the middle of the Forbidden City (the famous medieval centre). I wandered first around the immense Tianmen Square in hot glaring sun. Every flagstone has a number on it for organising huge shows with millions taking part. Then into the main wonderful walled city full of palaces and temples. Gradually the whole palace started to fill up with soldiers in very colourful mediaeval costumes with flags, swords, spears shields, armour. I later found they were about to make the last part of the film of The Last Emperor (director David Lean). The centre of their activity was where I was due to meet Lu but in one hours time. The assistants then were telling all 4000 tourists that we must leave. I explained my problem that I had to meet up with someone on the steps of the Temple of Heavenly Peace. So I was standing on every higher point so that he could see me. They were very amused and eventually they forced me out through the 30' high gates at spearpoint, roaring with laughter. I felt desperate as all taxis were full and I had to get back for my plane. Fortunately I found a girl tourist guide who understood. She must have had great authority as she commandeered someone else's taxi and ordered him to take me back to the hotel where they were very relieved to see me.

We got to the plane with 2 hours to spare. There was a huge boarding muddle as they were dealing with that day's passengers and leftovers from the stormy day before - like me. In the scuffle to get through the gate I met Paul, a madagascan student learning Chinese and medicine at the same time - looked like a skinny Andy Gayle. I lost sight of him but on the plane I heard a lot of arguing – he was persuading someone to change seats so he could sit with me. Then a very tiring conversation in poor English and muddled French all the way to Shanghai (1 ½ hours). We had a typical steep Boeing 727 landing, giving me very painful ears. The baggage claim was like Madurai the year before – just long benches in the open air under a simple roof. I was met by Wei-Ping who kindly got a taxi for Paul then off we went to this place – Fudan University guest house – by midnight. Had to get them to replace a defective bath light then slept well till woken by pretty maid who had the job of changing my big thermos flask of hot water for making green tea. Very different from our black tea but very refreshing. Had bread and jam for breakfast in time for Wei-Ping to arrive. We planned my lectures then went for a stroll in the University grounds. It is very large and growing fast. The grounds were full of students going between residential parts and the canteens, each with two enamel plates to be washed up in long rows of sinks. All a bit like camping. All the students were in shorts or pretty dresses. Had lunch alone – chinese rice,

then off to my first lecture in the Science Hall (a converted English club) to an audience of about 30. We had two power cuts so it took two hours. I tried to stop after 1 ½ hours but Wei-Ping insisted that I continue. I was grabbed after by a giggling man who had translated Peter Large's methylotroph booklet. He pressed reprints of his papers on me (in Chinese) and promised to send me his Chinese book. We drove back here for a special dinner with the Chairman, Wei and two others. Very good dinner which I found confusing because the tradition is the the guest has to start everything and I had no clue what should be first etc. My chosptick skills were admired. They spent a lot of time explaing leadership features in China with very little respect, so a very nice conversation. I am now waiting for two of Wei's students to call to see me. They are one hour late which is good as I have able to write this. I have airconditioning and windows with mospquito mesh so it is very comfortable. It is noisy because of the residence opposite with open windows good for studying Chinese social behaviour including playing loud music all the time. There is only radio station so the noise from different windows is all synchronised. Everyone here is very friendly so although very crowded especially with cyclists it is all very pleasant. 30 degrees. I shall abandon hope of the students turning up and go for a walk to cool down. I have to be up by 6.30 tomorrow morning to go on a trip somewhere. So Goodnight.

31st Sept. Hello again.The University seems full of vast classrooms filled with silent studying students, avoiding noisy dormitories. I woke at 6.30 to a strange drumming sound. It was pouring rain bashing the bamboo thatch beneath my window. I had breakfast of warm damp bread (toast?) and apricot jam and a boiled egg, dumped on the table with nothing to eat it with. No problem it was hard-boiled. A car arrived for our trip with Wei and a very little girl who looked 12 but was probable ten years older. We drove in a very hot damp car in pouring rain to Houzou two hours to the west. Said to be paradise which it might have been in sunny weather. There were many typpical chinese gardens involving walks between elegant pavilions round little ponds over bridges and through grottoes. Many had special rocks said to look like animals. Enjoyable but chilly in the rain so very relieved to go to lunch. Too much food as usual but very good: duck, pork fish shrimp, bamboo shoots, sea cucumber- Holothurians) and eels. I was told they were worms but I bravely ate them. When the rain stopped we wandered off again to see the leaning tower of Houzou. There were many people posed on rocks for photos. Houzou is said to be the Venice of China but it was too cold to explore further so we drove home - a wild 2 hour dash in a modern Japanese car. I slept for two hours had dinner then prepared tomorrow's 9.0 lecture. This was interrupted by students who came and took me to their dormitory. It was the size of our bedroom but filled with seven bunks. I sat as an entertainer on the edge of one. Puccini was blaring from a radio – they all seemed keen on western classical music. They have mosquito nets but no fan to cool or heater. In winter the average temperature is about zero. They asked if it is still always very foggy in London as in Dickens and what do people think of the puritans! I returned at 10.0 to continue with lecture preparation. I cannot remember if I have said that I am enjoying it all – not as ecstatically as India but still very good. Feeding well, feeling good but missing you. Goodnight.

1st Sept. Shanghai. I am writing at the end of the day to the sound or pouring rain, in bed with green (sour) tea and the sound of cicadas. I woke early and had the usual breakfast with an American couple who are researching pre-revolutionary students. Wei collected me

and my slides for my lecture to staff, post graduates and final year BSc students (including Francis and Denis??). It was 2 hours long and very tiring. A very attentive audience but no questions at the end. We then had to sit and wait for a call to Beijing about Wei-Ping's visa which is still in London. Lunch had more political discussion then trip into Shanghai in a university car with a lecturer (Ling) and F and D. We went to the waterfront hoping to see a junk but only saw one in the distance. We went across the river and back on a crowded ferry for the view. We drove to a music shop to see if there were any concerts. No but we did get tickets for the circus. We left the car and walked to a flea market where there were lines of people selling goldfish in basins and small slate stone-lidded boxes containing crickets which they use in fighting matches. I bought some rather dull polished stones for Clive. It was difficult to get good photos in the rain but I got a nice one of boys coming out of school. Thought of Hughie starting primary school. I hope all went well. Trudged around a shopping center – informative but dull. Prices are similar to UK but very few people have any money. The Friendship Store (western currency) was full of beautiful things but I didn't buy anything, planning to do shopping in Chendu. My memory of Shanghai will be walking with wet feet in sandals in the rain, dodging bikes. My friend Francis is like a tall gangly short-sighted noisy Winston (a Hong Kong student friend at home), Went to Remnin (people's) restaurant. Full with half the population of Shanghai all shouting. Had some nice eels. F & D spent a lot of time arguing with the waiters but they would not say why.

The circus was marvellous. It was called 'Acrobats' but there were none and except for a lack of clowns it was a circus. Three monkeys rode racing bikes around the ring and then pulled a rickshaw with their trainer in it. A special item was a panda that slid down a playground slide and drove a cart pulled by an alsation dog while it played a horn. The best was four trapeze artists who seemed so calm although I was sweating with fear for them. Out into the rain and half an hour persuading a taxi to drive us home. Said sad good bye to F and D. I leave tomorrow at 9.00 but I have become so casual I have not even packed. Still pouring with rain; I hope it is better in Chendu. I will write from there tomorrow..I shall try to find some postcards there. Don't work too hard Libby or I will feel guilty. Don't forget me please.

Background to Chendu visit.

This is from a search using Google AI asking about prof Zhou in Academia Sinica in Chendu in 1986: "In 1986, Professor Zhou was a lead researcher at the Chengdu Institute of Biology (CIB), which is part of the Academia Sinica (now the Chinese Academy of Sciences). During this period, his lab in Chengdu was a significant site for microbiological research in China, hosting international academic visitors such as Professor Chris Anthony from the University of Southampton".

Prof Zhou wanted me to help them purify the enzyme responsible for oxidation of methane in his new bug. This had originally taken Howard Dalton and all his post docs and students about 15 years to achieve. Very difficult even to copy as it is made up of three separate proteins only one of which was relatively straightforward to assay and purify, and then only with modern equipment).

2nd Sept. Chendu. I had an odd but eventually successful day. Woke up early at 7 to pack for 8.30 for my 11.0 flight. Wei turned up to tell me it was at 4.0. Luckily I got him to check again. He had read the ticket wrongly. I went for short stroll in the university grounds

and at last saw a bird – a beautiful kingfisher. Then a long hot trip to the airport followed by a two hour wait made tolerable by chat with a nice Chinese boy who is going to Japan. The flight to Chendu was in a Boeing 707, a very hot 2 ½ hours. The air conditioning was one small paper fan per passenger distributed at the start of the flight. We were fed with small pastries and packets of spicy stuff that looked like crushed cockroach mixed with sesame seeds. The airport was again like Madurai – almost open air and remarkably we were allowed to photograph the plane. I was met by Prof Zhou and Mr Zhang and driven through lovely flat countryside to the Institute in Chendu. It is on the edge of town and I have been offered a bike to explore. I have a 4 room flat overlooking a volleyball court and a skating rink. It all feels very comfortable. They told me my schedule includes 5 days up on the edge of the Himalayas - provided the roads are OK. I must get some sleep now so that I can smile enthusiastically when they ask me to purify an enzyme for them. The cicadas are very loud making me wish I am sitting on my bed at home drinking tea. I have been drinking a lot of their jasmine tea which has me spitting out flowers every minute or so. Zhang has kindly brought me some Nescafe and dried milk. Zhang had a degree in biochemistry and wanted to join the Institute as a researcher but he had no choice. They said he had to be a secretary/administrator. Every good thing in my Chendu visit was thanks to him. NOTE: He later visited us in Southampton. Good night.

3rd Sept. Wednesday. I am writing this at 5.30 while waiting to go to a banquet. The science Institute is surrounded by 4 storey blocks of flats for the workers and has playgrounds, shops and gardens. This morning I woke in the dark at 7.0 to the noise of pouring rain then fell asleep again, waking just in time to go for breakfast with Zhang in a huge cool canteen. The cook thrashes about in a room next to the eaters so I can watch his wok technique. I ate only 20% of my breakfast of sweet bean curd soup and dumplings full of some sweet stuff. Followed by omelette with huge buttered rolls. Good. Everyone here is so friendly. I am the only European. My lunch was also vast, spicy and good. I ate 1/3 of my lunch and ½ of my excellent beer. I gave the remainder to the cook's assistant and to students. A good move. NOTE: I later learned that I was always given so much because visitors from China to UK on my exchange scheme had £10 per day for food and so I had to have the equivalent of this every day in China – where everything is much much cheaper. This morning after breakfast I was collected by Zhang and taken to the Institute – 300 yards away. I was introduced to the director and heads of labs. They all seemed old and very short and were wearing traditional blue workers uniforms. We all sat in armchairs around a very large room. Tea was poured but before having any we were dragged off to see around the Institute. Our tour started with looking at 20 cupboards full of pickled snakes and lizards, all looking the same. I soon ran out of appreciative comments. I asked if they had any live ones so was shown a 4 foot lizard and a beautiful orange and black American King snake. It got itself tied around my wrist and bag and we had to be prised apart. The botany department was a roomful of pressed brown shapeless flowers. I only had ten minutes to admire them so I just about coped. I returned for lunch feeling a bit dead or pickled myself. I fell asleep so had a very late lunch. After 3 essential aspirins I gave a 20 minute chat to Zhou's research group. After they talked a bit I was asked to outline my strategy for purifying methane mono-oxygenase. This was successful because Zhou had got them to prepare similar procedures and they had very little practical experience. They said that all six of them are dropping

everything to help me. I feel hopeful that it might be successful. They all look about 15 but are 21 – 28. Four girls (beautiful) and 2 boys (less so). Had a nice chat about my name. I am to be called Chris. "After the cultural revolution we abolished titles". At the moment I am being disturbed by a trumpeter practising scales. Last night it was a pianist playing Bach.

NOTE added later: I spent more time in the labs than the students (etc) who I was supposed to be advising. I was usually there at 8.30 and they turned up at 10.0. They had no idea how difficult the task was. The enzyme has 3 components. To purify one of them was feasible because there was a simple assay system. But the others depended on having the other 2 (purified) components in their assay system. So I set out to purify the one component. To do this we need a spectrophotometer to assay it. They had an unpacked Unicam SP500 which is the same as the one I used as a research student 25 years earlier. I could just about remember how to use it so I wrote simple instructions for them. At the end of the visit I was somehow told that my visit had not been a success as "I had failed to purify their enzyme".

I have just returned from a Banquet with the Director who looked as if he had just come in from sweeping the street, some office staff and Heads of Labs. There were 20 dishes for 9 people. At a large round table. Beside everyday dishes like carp, goose, squid and eels we had sea cucumber and jellyfish. All washed down with beer and rose wine and a 70% wine liqueur. We had Eternal Friendship toasts followed by toasts to great British scientists – Newton, Darwin and Anthony and to Anthony's Hairs (Clive and Hugh). This last had to be drunk standing up and knocking the drink straight down in one go. The result was like a satisfactory sneeze but with a very violent aftertaste. The local flautist then struggled through Auld Lang Syne. I quoted something I had prepared from Mao's Little Red Book which they recognised and clapped. I am unlikely to lose any weight on this trip. I shall try to post this tomorrow. Missing you all as I creep under my mosquito net after hunting for a Rennie. Goodnight with love.

Chendu Thursday 4th September. I got a letter from Claude today posted 26th July from Spain. Dear Family hope you are all as well as I am. Just had a lovely shower. Very complicated, illogical way of regulating the Ascot in the kitchen coupled to the shower. Today started gloomy - probably because sunrise is not until 6.40. Had breakfast of a big bowl of sweet bean curd soup and a big plate of roasted nuts -eaten with a shovelling spoon. All crockery has the same flowery pattern. I went out for a stroll in the gardens nearby, where there were ranks of older people doing Tai Chi ("a gentle, low-impact form of exercise that combines slow, flowing movements with deep breathing and focused meditation"). Then a sudden shock as someone doing similar exercise with a sword hurtled out at me from behind the bushes. He saw me in time. At work I found that Zhou had miscalculated the amounts of material to use, planning to use 10 times what is needed. So I have already proved useful. Everything in the lab is like my PhD stuff 25 years ago. Old glass tubes for purification columns, rubber bungs, scales with tiny brass weights. Most of the time I sit and advise but I usually pour the columns for them. Sadly the cells were not active but we continued as if they were, in order to practice the techniques of enzyme preparation that they had not done before. All explanations involved difficult speech helped by writing. The two girls are called Ding and Ling (that rings a bell, I said – but wasted). After an unnecessary enormous lunch I sat on my balcony in the sun. I urge you, Libby, to drop everything

important and go and lie in the sun putting aside your conscience which can lie beside mine for company. In the afternoon I sat in the lab planning my chapter to go in my Bacterial Energy Transduction book. At 5.20 I left with my bike. Starting by snapping the key in its lock. I can still arrange it so that it looks locked. It very old-fashioned rather like my first bike

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more than 30 years ago. It is not comfortable (very hard saddle) but it does have brakes. Everywhere is very flat so it is easy. I set off south towards the station and airport, soon reaching the country where the rice harvest is ongoing. They thresh it by smashing fistfuls of rice stalks against the sides of big wooden tubs then spread the rice on the road to dry. The road is filled with a continuous stream of bikes and 3 wheel bikes with a cart attached. Many people walking with loads hanging from bamboo poles across the shoulders. They are very springy so the walk is a kind of bouncy shuffle. I saw only three house sparrows and a few pigeons. When I did at last hear a songbird it was in a cage. I came home slightly sore but also satisfied.

Another big dinner with soup served last. Some fish and strips of beef with onions ginger and peppers (Sichuan beef). Very spicy but very good. I have established the tradition of handing out more than half my lunch and beer and leave the hall to appreciative clapping and cheers. This evening I cycled down town towards Mao's big statue. The cycle tracks take up to 10 cycles across and there are very few cars on the much narrower car section. I could not work out what the arrangements were at crossings. I just got in the middle of a group and went with them. I saw an exhibition of paintings on silk which I walked back to later on. I won't be able to resist buying one eventually but I resisted today. I got back from my ride in the dark. Lights are not used so I let my white shirt flap around in order to be seen. When I got back I watched a lot of boys skating on the rink near my room, very complex and extremely noisy. Zhou's wife had just had an operation on her nose. "it's not cancer although that is very popular in Sichuan". Off to bed. Goodnight.

5th September. 20 days to go. I have just had an orange from the huge bag of apples and oranges given me by Zhang – the kind and helpful secretary. After usual enormous spicy food I always stagger out of the canteen under the usual charge of bikes, belching beer and blowing my nose. This evening for some reason everyone was interested in me getting up from their tables and coming over to look at what I was eating (shredded cabbage in pepper/ginger sauce covered in brown sugar). Others came to find out where I was from, returning to inform the other tables. Had routine day in lab, writing and commiserating with their failures. I actually saw a bird - probably Swinhoe's minivet. Came home early to prepare tomorrow's lecture. I paid 6p to get a repair man by the side of the road (as in India) to raise my saddle. I then rode halfway round Chendu to get a feeling of its scale. But most of the feeling was in my backside! I was nearly run down by a bike-cart with about 50 quacking ducks tied together in bundles. Off to Peking I suppose. I cycled around the university as it looked inviting. Everywhere there were gym bars (parallel bars) like the ones outside my window with swinging Sichuanese on them. There were about 20 ping pong tables scattered about. Bed time. How is the decorating? Don't forget the sun.

6th and 7th. Sat and Sunday. For the first time I have missed writing for a day. Yesterday was very odd. I woke feeling very queasy which I assumed was nerves about my lecture. It is usual to work on Saturdays. I gave a 2 hour lecture to the Institute and visitors from Sichuan University. About 50 altogether. Zhang translated. It all started with a bit of a

farce. The theatre had a stage and screen at the back. At the side in front was a blackboard with a tape recorder on the side. They swapped things around a few times until they got back to the starting point. They then dropped all my slides on the floor. Fortunately I had

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numbered them. Every time I moved I risked tripping over cables or vast thermos jugs of tea. I started my lecture at the black board so they brought me tea there – in a huge mug with a lid. When I moved to the projector where I had to shout they brought me another mug of tea. Then similar when I moved to the middle to be nearer the microphone and overhead projector. The whole lecture was punctuated by me moving between my three pots of tea, replenished each time I arrived. The audience managed to follow me through Zhang and they laughed at my little attempts at jokes. They stayed awake for 2 hours. I forgot to mention that the first 10 minutes were filmed for television which required great strands of wiring and very bright lights.

I could only face a very small lunch followed by a trip to some parks in the afternoon which was pleasant but tiring as I made an effort to chat. I asked if we could return and 3 students ran off to tell Zhou that I was not well. He soon came with three girls from the lab, all very concerned. One was sent out to get some starch and the others to get boiling water presumably imagining I was about to give birth. The three of them played about with sugar and water to create a glutinous clear liquid jelly which I had to swallow while they all watched. I would have preferred to have been left alone but they were all so kind. Zhou looking so sorrowful, said he remembered what it was like to be left alone when feeling unwell far from home. I passed round pictures of my lovely wife and sons. They have very strict family planning laws: one child per family. Extras would bring fines and loss of jobs. They long for twins who count as a single child.

I have just had a lovely hot bath. It must have a leak as I stepped out of lovely warmth into a flood of cold water. I put on shorts, sweater and duvet and lay on the sofa to read, then to bed with a rather high temperature. When I woke, feeling almost well, for my special day out it was drizzling in a very miserable manner. Still had a very good day. Went with Zhang by car to a different county to visit a very big Buddha and nice park with attractive temples like those in the Forbidden City in Beijing. In one of the there were 500 life-size statues of Buddha's disciples. They all had big bellies and ears which I was told bring good luck. We stopped for a drink and mooncake which is only served at this time of year. Sweet stuff inside a sort of doughy pastry – very nice and filling. Asked if I would prefer tea or coke I chose coke and was served cocoa. Excellent. Then to the zoo to see 8 very bored pandas but nice gardens and nicer B temple. Saw boys playing a sort of badminton which is called birdball. I now have five words on a card. Nee How(hello); Shi Shi (thank you); Chy Jen (goodbye) nu (no); how how (very good). My pathetic attempts are very popular. After the zoo we went to Zhou's flat on the 6th floor (by stairs) in the quiet outskirts of Chendu. I was asked do you have any children? Yes. And do you also have daughters? They have a daughter (age 8) and a boy age 14 who is very short sighted and shy with prominent teeth braces. We had tea then watched the whole family making special dumplings with spring onions and beef. When I asked questions they all tried to answer. One rushed off to get a picture book. Another tried to answer by drawing in the flour which covered the floor while the others waved their floury hands. The air was filled with a whirling fog of flying flour and the sound

ot the Kyrie from Bach's B minor mass. The young daughter had not been allowed to come with us today as she had to stay at home to learn to play an English tune on the piano for me some time next week. Next was a small banquet. Started with two large carp in ginger and brown gravy sludge. They looked like two dead fish

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found on a dried up lake. Very good. Chicken, beef and shredded radish in soy sauce, dumplings, soup with what looked like egg white swirling around in it. It was in fact 'wooden white ear soup' made from a fungus. Fortunately chopsticks permit very slow eating. After eating I played chess with the son (Lincoln) where he blocked all my early silly moves and won to his delight. We returned home in a very crowded very friendly bus.

I have a week work ahead of me then off for a six day trip north Sichuan – at 6-7000 feet. I hope the rain does not wash away the road first. Now to bed for an early night. It is very nice have two big rooms - a comfy sitting room and separate bed room which I can spray with anti mosquito stuff. I got 4 bites last night as I have become a bit lazy.

I have checked the places we visited today are: Baogangsi monastery of divine light; Xindu county Osmanthy lake and art gallery; Zoo also near monastery. Goodnight.

8th Sept. Monday night. Got up so late I missed breakfast. Had an orange, apple, shortbread and coffee. I spent the day sitting, writing, advising and still feeling a bit gutty. Still well enough to hungrily eat a plate of tiny dry, salty sweet fish. The fungi in today's soup looked like those white spindly ones that are deadly poisonous. In the afternoon I met X from Zoology. He invited me to his flat in the adjacent block; I accepted as his English is easy to follow. His flat was squalid. Everyone leaves their doors opened into the concrete corridors, in which shared cookers and sinks sit in smelly Dickensian grime. He gave me tea and showed me pictures of the mountains where I will be going – looked like Canadian Rockies. At lunch time I met Marianne (German girl) and American Bob, both teaching English for one year. They eat Chinese fashion walking along eating out of bowls. I had a small dinner then walked down the wide main street (Remnin Nanlu) To Mao and back. The smaller streets are lined with 'Free markets' where people can trade as they like. This has only recently been allowed. Very popular are comic magazines left on the ground read by squatting vultures who never seem to buy them. There are peanuts and pears galore weighed on pans on strings and sticks. Near the Jian Jian hotel there are lines of pictures and calligraphy for sale – usually by the painters. Some are very good but expensive. I met two German students en route to Lhasa in Tibet which is now opened up. Back to home to finish mundane washing. Glad I bought lots of underpants. Its very humid so a challenge to get them dry. Its been cool today so the cicadas stopped and I needed my Jacket. Actually they have just started up again as I have started to feel warm. I hope this does not all seem too dull; failed to get postcards again. A big work day tomorrow. I had a luxurious hot bath and started a new novel by John Irving, the author of Hotel New Hampshire. I have now had to stop as I was rushing through it too quickly. Am reading a very good Chinese History book tonight. Good night and love to you all.

9th Sept. Tuesday 11.15 pm I am writing this now in the hope that I can get it posted soon. I had a dull but useful day in the lab and I'm getting on with my book chapter. I Prepared my Thursday lecture on biotechnology which is to be attended from people from all sorts of institutes. They suggested it should be for 3 hours with a short break in the middle! I have still seen no birds. I have started to have short naps at lunchtime celebrating

the start of senility perhaps. This evening I walked to town again and bought a few small presents which improved my skill at haggling. On the way back I went to the bar in the modern hotel for a coke. Such luxury. It is very posh and too expensive for most Chinese. I walked back in the dark, the street lights being very dim. Cars and buses only turn them on 10

when they are about to run over the cyclists -sometimes after. I had a nice chat with Marianne who lives in the flat opposite, and with American Bob who lives in the flat above. Still no birds so after checking its authenticity I have bought a painting of a red-billed magpie (See picture below; now hanging on the wall at home). I have taken rather few pictures because everywhere is rather grey. Everyone is getting excited about our trip to the mountains which will be about a week altogether. It will soon be too late for you to get letters from here – they will arrive home after I do. Goodnight.

Wednesday 20th Sept. I had an odd but pleasant day. I was taken to Sichuan University in the south east of the city by a river. This was to meet people but it was a teachers day – a one day holiday when they are paid a bonus of £1. I was met by the Head of Zoology who took us to the museum where the most interesting objects were the newly-enrolled students all looking about 14 and very excited at all the exhibits. Yet again I had to admire bottles of pickled lizards etc. They remembered I like birds so had to trek around glass cases full of moth eaten discoloured stuffed birds. Managed to confirm the identity of the birds in my picture I had bought. The stuffed animals were terrible, the horse looking like a child's bad picture of one. I was then taken to admire some microscopes followed by a wander to find staff. We failed, so sat and discussed differences in universities in China and UK. The director looked like one of his stuffed exhibits, very wizened with black jutting out teeth; I failed to see the expected lines of stitching holding the stuffing in. I couldn't see him much of the time as he was shyly crouched at his desk behind three gigantic tea vacuum flasks.

We gave up at 11.0 and wandered around a park which had a bamboo museum, all very peaceful. Zhou and Zhang were with me Zhang with his new dictionary. He wanted to know if the English are phlegmatic. I have been stopped in the street and asked the same thing. Back home the sun came out for a nice read on my balcony before the cloud came back. I prepared a lecture, chatted and came home early and slept for one hour. Went for walk in own around the small back streets, all very enjoyable. Bought some presents. I must come with camera when it is light. I found an interesting music instrument shop. Every other place is an eating place. A bit like Tirupati in India but with narrower roads no lorries cars autos animals but with bikes and bikes and bikes. Sides are lined with pollarded plane trees keeping everything nice and cool. I must get a student to take me on a tour of the snack bars. On the way back I stopped at the Jin Jian hotel for coke in the bar for the 30 minute walk back up Remnin Nanlu road. Well lit and very wide with beautiful conifers between road and cycle lanes. Very little traffic. It is macabre at night in the small streets with cars just flashing their lights occasionally. All a bit like a creepy opera set. Now late so to bed. Goodnight.

11th Sept. Just received your nice letter Libby. What a busy family. Very good to hear about Hugh and Clive's school. The 'house maid' has just let herself in and walked through my room to collect her underclothes from a line on my balcony! To get rid of my mild gut rot which I have had since Saturday I have been living on sugar lumps and coke and feeling quite

well. This morning I felt well. I gave 3 hour lecture with a half hour break in the middle to people from local labs. Very tiring. After a small lunch, back to another two and half hours discussion which was like a public examination on all aspects of biotechnology. I then felt unwell (gut rot) and so the students took me to a doctor. I feel basically OK but this is all
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going on too much. I was interviewed by 2 lady doctors in workers blue tunics at a little desk in a corridor with my pretty student (flame) translating. Very embarrassing miming my symptoms. The whole thing became a big joke. I am omitting a few unpleasant medical bits. I was then given unnecessary painkillers and gentamycin (probably not appropriate. It was in small glass sealed tubes. I was told to break these and swallow although it said it is for injection. I refrained. I was also given traditional Chinese medicines in the form of powders wrapped in little cones of newspaper which I did take. The students made me some more starch/sugar stuff to keep me alive. I am going to see a French film with subtitles tonight in a cinema close nearby. Yestersay I heard the Edelweiss song from Sound of Music and tracked it down to a little girl driving an electrically powered tank with its loudspeaker playing the incongruous song. A big chemist in the discussion today looked just like Chairman Mao. I wrote this down and passed it to Zhang who was translating. He burst into a fit of giggles because he was well known for behaving like him also. While waiting for Chie Jien to take me to the film Shujie and Zhou arrived with the Chinese medicine. When the student came they were told to go back to the lab and Zhou took me to the film by bike. It was spoken in Chinese but dubbed into French but it was fun guessing the plot. We cycled back in enormous crowds of bikes in the dark with occasional flashes of lights from the cars. I called in to see the New Zealanders living upstairs. They have very pronounced accents. The students must have some difficulty being taught by them and by English American and Germans.

12th Sept. Had my usual starch and medicine breakfast, feeling very cheerful. Some students came to check that I was ok to go on the trip up the mountains. I feel well and have some english medicine if there is a problem. Sorry about all this self-centred medical stuff. Didn't do much the rest of the day. The girls are in the lab trying to get something done. We have managed to measure one enzyme (the flavoprotein component C) and done some electrophoresis. Every technique is new to them so they often cannot do the procedures fast enough. After a small lunch provided by the girls we went to the 'Free market'. This is where any produce above the quotas that go to the government can be sold. A very colourful scene with bird and fish sellers, butchers with meat often hanging on low tree branches. The students are always so nervous that I might be cheated or perhaps get lost but I managed to escape them so I could stay longer. I potted in the lab in the afternoon then to Zhang's supper of noodles, shortcake and crisps with chili sauce all eaten together with chopsticks. His 4 year old daughter then played happy birthday on a piano, learned specially for me this afternoon. She also played the Sugar Plum Fairy with an elephant sort of stomping baseline. Her father sat beside her with a small stick wielded when her hand synchronisation went adrift. On tv we saw UK news about the start of a ballon race at Southampton! Everyone is getting very excited about our 1000km trip to the mountains; the rainy season is now safely over. My gut is now completely better. Goodnight.

14th Sept. Written in a town with no name on the way to Jai Zaigou. I am writing this, shivering and hoping to warm up. First, to finish yesterday. At 5.0 I went down town through

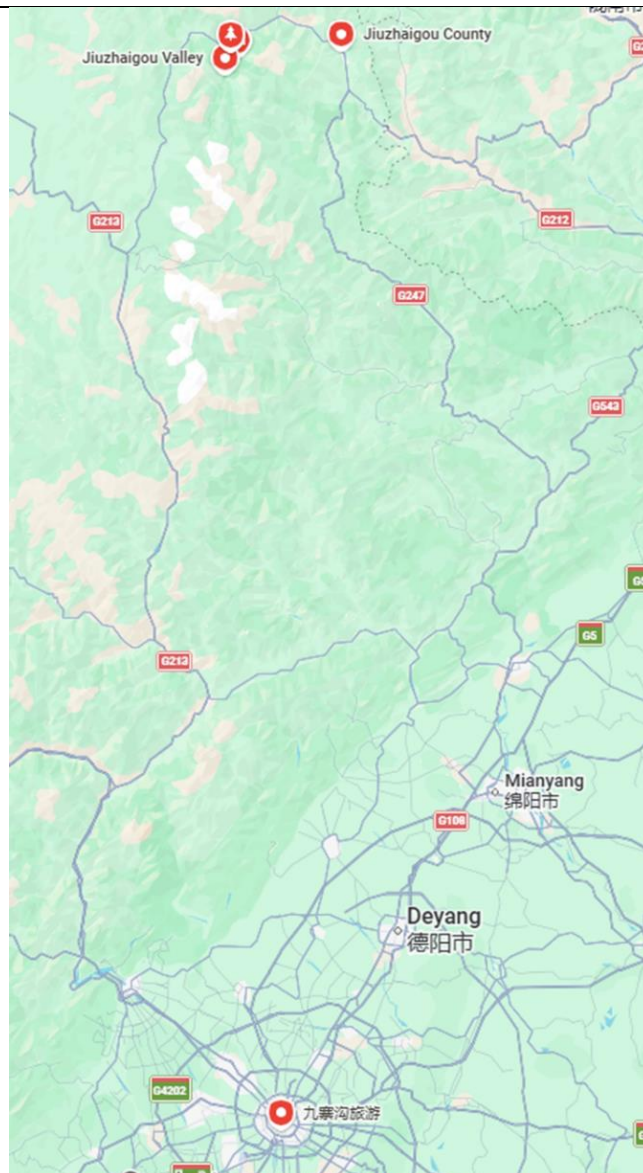
the free market. Then a pleasant drizzle turned to heavy rain so I trudged back through the little narrow streets in wetssocks and sandals. Decided to eat in the Jin Jiang hotel. The 9th floor restaurant is very posh. Had coke and Weinerschnitzel, half a tomato and 9 chips. Very nice. An Englishman came and shared my table and we chatted for 3 hours. An accountant,

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he resigned from Esso to travel the world. Still raining when I left at 11.30. Finished packing for today's adventure.

Background to my visit to Juizhaigou

I googled (AI) for information about going there from Chendu: Jiuzhaigou National Park is located in Jiuzhaigou County, in Sichuan about 400 kilometres north of Chengdu. The area surrounding Jiuzhaigou (literally "Valley of Nine Villages") is primarily inhabited by indigenous Tibetan and Qiang ethnic groups.

In 1986, traveling from Chengdu to Jiuzhaigou was a rugged, multi-day overland expedition through the Minshan mountain range. While the area had officially opened to tourism in 1984, the infrastructure was still in its infancy, and the journey was far more arduous than the 4–8 hour trips possible today. The only way to reach the valley was by road. The trip typically took 2 to 3 days of driving each way, depending on weather and road conditions. Most travelers followed a route through Wenchuan, Maoxian, and Songpan. These were narrow, winding mountain roads prone to landslides and mudflows. Travel was primarily via rugged local buses or specialized tour vehicles. It was often noted that only buses with strong engines (no older than 3–4 years) were allowed because of the steep, high-altitude inclines. Because the journey was so long, travelers had to stay overnight in towns like Maoxian or Songpan before reaching the park entrance. By 1986, the site was transitioning from a remote logging area to a protected park.



Today. Sunday 14th. Seven of us set off at seven in the morning. The clocks had changed so I was an hour early. We are travelling in a nice new Japanese minivan, half of the

journey being over muddy mountain roads dodging many rockfalls. Eleven hours driving with an hour break for lunch (dumplings). In the small restaurants in the mountains we fill up our own bowls with rice from a huge vat of rice just inside the door as we go in. Early on we stopped at a small town to buy me a small bowl and chopsticks as these are not provided in rural areas. Fortunately my gut is now better. Wonderful mountain scenery with ancient Tibetan houses. The last part was 20 miles of flat valley floor at a watershed of two rivers. We had a long hold up by Yaks on the road. We arrived at this place (about 9000' high) in pouring rain. It is dark, wet and no heating so I am wearing both my jackets. They all treat me like an old man or a little boy. They all share

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rooms but I have my single room with an electric cooking ring which I am using as heater under my wicker chair. Good bed and bedding. The loo is just a hole in a set of 16 holes in a concrete slab under a roof, but all open. I shall try to avoid. Supper was crazy mix of smashed bones of wild rabbit with stomach, heart and liver followed by yak meat and garlich to munch (I refrained). Finished with nice mutton stew. In polite restaurants you drop anything you cannot swallow on to the table cloth. Here you drop it on the floor. All a bit grubby. At a short stop today we saw a beautiful River Redstart; hope this is a good omen. We also saw some unidentified birds of prey. It is now 9.30 so I shall crawl under my 3 quilts to warm up and sleep.

At one stop in the mountains the girls picked a bunch of pretty flowers for me but this was seen by a policeman. He took the flowers away and counted them throwing them theatrically one by one onto the ground then charging me 1 yen (?smallest currency unit) per flower.

15th. Sept. After I put down my pen to sleep the American girl Votya turned up to use my cooking ring to warm up. She is a National Geographic photographer, mountaineer and now travel agent, planning adventure holidays -cycling in Mongolia and horse riding in Jui zaigou. I longed to creep into bed but she wanted to talk. Eventually I slept until 5.30 when I woke feeling very hot with a violent headache and a bit sick. I felt abit better after some aspirin. Bitterly cold and dirty annd gloomy. Zhang came in at 7.15 with the same symptoms – 6/9 of us had them. Votya called in tell us that we all had altitude sickness due to our crossing mountains at about 15000 feet. The three boys who were unaffected were the three who had never travelled in a car previously and had been a bit queasy. I gave them some coke to settle their stomachs. I later found this prevents altitude sickness because it helps regulate blood pH!. No breakfast thank you. Off at 8.30 soon all feeling well. A wonderful drive over broad watershed grasslands with nomadic Tibetans (?) with their black tents, yaks and 'cowboys' (Yakboys). I took loads of pictures from the van including one of a yak being milked. Nowhere to get lunch so ate shortbread and pears. The last part of the journey was a long descent through woods and mountains like bits of Wales including the Rose Bay Willow Herb growing beside the roads. Saw Great Grey Shrike and Azure winged magpies. We arrived at about 5.0 in rain but still beautiful.

The National park is an area of steep mountains and valleys with many waterfalls and deep blue/green lakes. We are half way up a valley at about 8000 feet. Not as cold as last night but I have accepted a gift of Zhangs quilted overcoat. I have the single luxury room in a wooden hut set amongst many others struggling up the hillside. I have a wooden bed, chair and cupboard. Concrete floor. There is a window with one third of its glass missing and

electric light which is what makes it luxury. This is provided by a car battery with a 12volt bulb. I bought some candles in the 'camp shop' and have one on the bedhead and one on the chair. We had supper of two bowls of noodles in chile sauce. Perhaps I have not mentioned that Sichuan cuisine is famous for its intense spicy heat. Now 8.30 so time to go home for bed. I am not allowed a key so have to get someone from the other side of the 'camp' to open my door. It is all like the logging camp that it was until recently but sadly it has no camp fire. Morale is high because tomorrow we go walking (no mini bus!). Good night.

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16th Sept. I am writing to the sound of the camp 'disco'. I had looked in through a window and seen a great sight of Chinese soldiers in their peaked hats dancing in pairs to Carmen Habanera and Tchaikovsky Swan lake. I had an excellent sleep. I fell asleep while reading and was woken by a burning candle falling on my head. Quickly extinguished but I had to spend a lot of time removing the wax in the morning. I was woken by Zhang hammering on the door at 6.30 but breakfast was not until 7.30. Shaved in almost cold water from my vacuum flask. Dressed: vest shirt sweater pyjama top jacket and jacket. And pyjama trousers beneath real trousers. An excellent idea as I kept warm most of the day. The rain soon cleared away. We went in the van up one of the three valleys then trundled down stopping frequently for photos. Had lunch in small 'hotel' with no heating at 8000 feet: pigs ears and rice. I went for a walk behind the restaurant and saw 3 hoopoes. As I was about to take photo a young yak came round a bush demanding a photo of him instead (rather like the Indian children). Appropriately I saw an Elliot's Laughing Thrush. Everywhere beautiful lakes and forest bumping frequently into Vodya. I sat in the front seat of the van today so I could leap out for photos. Good fun. The 'roads' were single track mud, rock or river. Went up to 9000 feet. Pearl Rapids covered a very wide area and you could hire welly boots for wading. Lots of Chinese tourists struggling and laughing with these leaking boots. I have now been moved to the official Foreigner's Room with 2 lights (one working) a bath and loo. Hot water is only 7.30 -8.10 pm and I missed it. Still no heating so I am crouched by my candles listening to Swan Lake in Chinese disco style. After supper I shocked Zhang when I told him I was going for a walk alone to a Tibetan village. In a deep forested valley with Michaelmas daisies in the fields. At the village I was met by 7 little kids who signed that they would like sweets. I proved that I had none. They were concerned that a passing old tractor had splashed mud down one side of me. They are both filthy and charming. One offered me some nuts which I found were delicious roast chestnuts. They then all came down the hill to the village with me pretending to ride horses – just like Clive. Had a 2 hour chat with Vodya then home to my room. Disco has just stopped at 9.50. Think I'll do a few press ups to warm up before bed. Goodnight lovely family.

17th Sept. Wearing all my clothes and a blanket I was just warm enough last night. All the lights had fused so shaving in a dark windowless bathroom was unpleasant; torch in one hand and wet razor in the other. Usual tasteless rice gruel and steamed bread for breakfast. In light rain I set off down the hill to the hotel to send a telegram to Chendu to remind them to get my flight ticket. Set off back up the hill in light sun. The minibus offered a lift but I wanted to walk the 6 miles and 1200 feet back to camp. "OK we will come too; "its too dangerous". Eventually I had to pretend to be angry shouting that I am not a little boy or an

old man. So I was laden with mooncakes and root beer and cheered on my way. Soon I was warm enough to transfer pyjamas and jacket to my bag with my big jacket tied round waist. A beautiful walk past lakes and waterfalls with poetic names. I walked down to a Tibetan village to take a picture of a watermill but I was stopped by a little girl throwing stones at me. Her mother told her off so I got the picture. Also a picture of a Chinese soldier sitting painting a beautiful picture by the roadside. I stopped by Tiger lake for a mooncake lunch. Later found Zhang and Flame coming up behind me. They had cheated and dropped off ahead to wait for me. As they were resting I had sneaked off and they then exhausted themselves trying to catch up with me. Small group of boys started to throw stones at me but were chased away

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by the soldier painter who had caught me up. I got back early so walked further up towards the Tibetan village for one hour, often crossing the streams on delicate logs. I saw Nutcrackers, Crested Kingfisher Plumbeous Redstarts. A really enjoyable proper mountain day, Wishing all the time you were here with me Libby. Usual supper with friend forcing lots of geens on me "for your vitamins sir". Early start tomorrow so I will go to bed early.

18th Sept. Full moon. Town near Huang Long. I am writing this in a luxury room with a desk and comfy bed and a light. No heat 9000 feet so need candles. Had a wonderful day. Breakfast of rice gruel and peanuts eaten with chopsticks. Off we went at 7.15 in dry weather even with a little sun. Set off down the road I walked up yesterday then through mountains and highly cultivated valleys all very satisfying. Harvest is more or less over – wheat, beans and potatoes. Climbed to 12,500 feet on usual single track mud road. Our driver and other drivers are all very careful. Everyone very excited at the top with great views of distant mountains. Down to base of Huang Long, part of the Juizhaigou nature reserve. There were big wooden cabins cooking for tourists. Noodles of course. My manners are going native with lots of scooping and slurping. We ate outside under a sort of tent. I agreed to meet Zhang at the temple that we expected to be at the top. Then set off walking up the mountain often on springy wooden planks over waterfalls. Lots of remarkable white rocks encrusted with minerals. After an hour I stopped to wait for Zhang. He came puffing up to say we must go down as we must set off at 2.0pm. So a 5 hour drive for a 2 hour visit! So down we went past miles of fertile terraces with yaks and oxen yoked to ploughs and horses laden with straw. Past Tibetan villages full of pigs, cows and dirty children.

Arrived at 4.00 in a small town being developed for the tourist trade, most of it still Tibetan. I got my room then set off the way we came to explore in the evening sun, meeting farmers and animals coming home for the night. I asked if I could photograph a child in a cage on its mother's back. She was shy and pointed to her dirty clothes, so I pointed to mine and this, together with her friends' encouragement to stand still worked OK. I took a photo while they were arranging her to their amusement as I had got all the others as well. I continued up the road past tall straw drying racks and saw mills. I asked an old man if I could photograph his horse; of course I really meant of him but he made a big fuss trying to get his horse lined up. He was wearing huge horn rimmed specs. I sat in the rare lovely warm sun to warm myself then back for supper at 6.0. This was excellent. 14 courses including pigs head and jellyfish – hydra phase so looked like coral. Had lots of chat about the pre-revolutionary leader Chiang Kai-shek; they have changed his name so there was confusion at the start. After eating went alone into the town like an old US frontier town in films. One main street

with overhanging houses. Of course I am the only westerner here. It is a forbidden area but I have a special pass. Investigating lights at the end of the road I found a baseball arena with banked concrete seating and floodlights. No charge so could wander in to watch, packed in among Tibetans and tourist chinese at 7000 feet up. Even with floodlights I could see stars in a black sky. Too cold to stay long so went home to go to bed. Breakfast is at 6.0 tomorrow as we have huge distance to go. I only have 9 pictures left so must exercise self control. Goodnight

Friday 19th Sept. I am writing this in the hotel at the bottom of the mountains. The hotel is a mass of buildings around courtyards full of lorries, coaches, tables, people and noise. It is 6.30 and my room has been found for me and Zhang has gone off to search for supper. The formality and warmth of my 4 candles is a great habit. The place is the usual slightly grubby place with dirty walls, cracked ceiling (just like home), with doors and windows that don't fit. I am in the luxurious position of having a double room so enough pillows etc. Reading this through I seem to have become very introspective and self centred. Sorry . Although the hotel was superficially good there were problems last night. There was no water working. I went to bed at 9.0. The water was turned on at 9.15 as I discovered – I had not turned off the taps so they roared into aquatic life. The hotel echoed to loads of televisions plus a noisy party in the next room which seemed to finish with a violent argument. Slept at 12. Woke as soon as it was light but this was the moon and it was only 4 am. Kept awake then by dogs and cockerels. Had nice breakfast of sweet hot milk and huge filled dumplings. A clear bright frosty morning. I shave in near dark room with only a damp flannel for water. We set off up the mountain on the way home in a lovely morning. After an hour or so we came on a big frozen muddy patch going over a bridge, with very deep ruts. They ignored my murmured expert advice and followed our non-driving noisy expert who said they should drive in the ruts. As expected the bottom of the engine was damaged so we were stranded at 6.0 am at 7000 feet two days from home.

We waved down a large 12 seater minibus and they kindly took me and Zhang. As we approached they yelled NO SMOKING as they had a petrol can leaking contents all over the van floor. Zhang sat on a wet cushion on the floor while I perched uncomfortably on luggage at the back over the rear wheels. The passengers were Hong Kong tourists. After 10 minutes a huge bump sent everything including me flying, slamming my head on the roof. So, on we went bruised and cold with me shivering. The passengers aged 23-33 were very friendly and kind. Gradually the day warmed up as we crossed the high grasslands again, covered in Yaks with Yakboys at about 9000 feet. We stopped for lunch in the same town we slept in on the way. Zhang and I just had mooncakes. We alternated between dry and sunny and wet and muddy roads. After more grassland we climbed into the mountains at 13,500 feet. At the top near sunset we broke down. The battery connection had banged itself loose. Reconnected OK but battery dead. On a single track road on the edge of a precipice we pushed a three point turn then pushed to bump start it down the hill. We carried on down in the dark to a hotel.

Arrived at 8.30 after ten hours of bumps. A glorious clear black sky but bitterly cold. Called to dinner across a big courtyard full of gigantic lorries to have dinner in open air bit of restaurant whose floor was covered in filth left by previous diners. I sat down with my own little aluminium trough and beer in a bowl. Nine course dinner. One of the best. I remained

wearing the same clothes I had not taken off for a week – vest, shirt, pullover, pyamas plus trousers and jackets. I forgot to say that the rest of our Chendu team hijacked a big bus and have met up with us here. The motherly secretary Miss Tzu has just bought me two apples, insisting I eat them for my vitamins. She always serves me best bits at dinner. A bit irritating but she means well. Guess we will make Chendu tomorrow then soon home. Nice thought. Not very noisy – on Chinese scale- so should get some sleep. I always have a cup of warm water for comfort at night although I would prefer tea. Up at 6.00 in the morning so I get under my 4 duvets for the night. Goodnight.

20th written on 21st. It is difficult to remind myself of the agonies of yesterday. We got up at 5.30 for an early start under a black sky with a nearly full moon, everywhere
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covered in frost. Gave myself the luxury of not shaving. The bus wouldn't start and there was a squabble with the driver. The Hong Kong boys had rented the bus so if we paid anyone it should have been the boys but the driver had charged Zhang £20. Now a very noisy fight. After an hour they got a huge timber truck to give us a tow start and we then spent most of the day crashing down the mountain, longing for the plains. Eventually we levelled out in fields of maize and beans. The farmers stick the orange corn cobs at the edge of flat barn roofs like castle crenellations. We followed the river Min all the way down. It is very rough and is used to send huge tree trunks down to the plain. By lunch time I had to remove excess clothes. Extremely hot, which was a pity as this stopped enjoying it as much as I should have as the rural scenes were very attractive. From the bottom of the mountains to Chendu the road was under repair. It took 2 hours to go 50 km. A horrible crashing ride. Still sitting on luggage with my head slamming the roof, I had to hold on and ride it like a horse. I was cursing everything Chinese all the way. In Chendu we went to the bus company and spent 30 minutes with the Hong Kong boys yelling complaints at the bus organisers. I don't know the outcome. Poor Zhang had to rush off to tell Mrs Z and Prof Zhou that we are safely back.

Had an 8 mile bike ride back. Then 4 cups of drink, hair wash, bath with whisky then a rest, lying under full speed fan. An hour later I felt recovered, with my liking for everyone and everything Chinese also recovered; so went down to the modern jin jiang hotel and the street picture gallery in lovely warm evening air. I resisted the temptation to buy more pictures (regretted 40 years later). Although I can change my FECs (Foreign exchange certificates) back to £s the ordinary money that I was given must be spent here. I bought a picture book of JaiZhaigou for Zhang to thank him for his continuous supply of kindness and help, and a Chinese story book in English for Hugh. After a coke I cycled back then stupidly called up to see Bob who was with NZ Colin and his wife so recounted my recent horror stories. Went to bed clean and warm and comfortable at 11.0.

21st. Sept. Sunday. I was woken at 6.0am by basketball outside my window so got up and cheerfully shaved in hot water. Wonderful. Had an apple for breakfast. Zhang turned up to tell me the details of my day including the time of my banquet! I gave him £30 in exchange for an FEC. These are being stopped because of a black market in them so Z is getting hard currency now. It is no problem for me to use the FECs. Went for a nice walk down to 'duck road' near here. The sides of the road are lined with rafts of ducks and chickens tied in bundles of about 20. They are thrown about as if already dead, while squawking and quacking loudly in protest. Being a market Sunday the place was full of ducks, veggies, tanks of huge carp, turtles, eels, pig heads and meat hanging on hooks. I

walked back, buying a stick and string set of scales from a small side stall for about £1. I would have bought more but it seemed daft to lug heavy weights home. I started to write this on my return but was interrupted by Miss Ding with my passport and air ticket for Beijing. My plane leaves at 06.55 tomorrow morning so must pack this afternoon. She has just left to buy me dumplings for lunch. I feel like I did when leaving Tirupati by way of Sri Lanka, when I would have preferred to go straight home. But I cannot really complain about a 3 day free holiday in Beijing so I will be brave.

I had lip-burning hot dumplings then sat on my balcony in the sun for an hour. At 4.0 I went to the department and met Zhou who was relieved to see that I am well. All the others were there except Chie ian. Had lots of photos outside the department then went in where I had to give a summary of my last 3 years research and give advice on work to be done in Chendu. I had thought about this a lot so it was no problem. All the time a department

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photographer was snapping away. I was given gifts – a heavy cork carving and from Zhang a chinese seal. We then all cycled down to the centre of Chendu for a banquet in my honour! Non- alcoholic but very good. Specialities: white wooden ear fungus, cow tendons, various worms, sea cucumbers. Lots of sentimental farewell speeches. Said goodbye to Zhou. Five of us cycled home in the dark – very difficult as most Chinese look similar from the rear on a bike and there seemed to be hundreds. Got home and packed.

22nd Sept. I overslept and was woken by Zhang shouting outside at 5.45. I dressed in 3 minutes and we were off in the dark to the airport. My heavy case registered 25kg but mysteriously dropped to required 20 kg as did everyone's luggage. Goodbye to kind competent Zhang. Arrived in Beiing at 9.20 where I was met by the same girl as the first time. Nice ride in air conditioned car on a clear and sunny morning. Unpacked at the same Friendship hotel then lunch with a German physicist and American mathematician. I had two hours lounging by the pool before being driven by car to British Airways to confirm my ticket home. All OK, then to Friendship Store where I could have spent a fortune but just bought a small jade seal for Claude. Had no more money so avoided stupid buying. After a nice stroll I returned to the car and back to hotel. At dinner the waiters always put single people onto tables together; I first shared with a 75 year old virologist who lectured me on the virology of AIDS which was interesting. Bertrand then joined me; a nice young French biochemist working in Cambridge. Very good company. We tracked down a bar on the roof and had very sweet brandy. We planned to eat together tomorrow night (he later visited us in Southampton). Nothing happens here in the evening. Off to see the wall tomorrow so must get to bed. Goodnight.

26th Sept. Tuesday. Woke to another clear sunny day; breakdast with a frindly Frenchman, my age who has been working for 4 weeks as a geologist in N. China. He will be returning on the same flight as me. I was driven in a huge AC car to the great wall. Yesterday I was asked if I wanted to visit the Microbiology Institute. I said no thanks. So today one of the senior scientists (Liang) came with me with all his papers on methylotrophs; a good compromise. The wall was very crowded and steep. I got away from Liang, who was trying to get me to read his papers, by walking very briskly up the steep steps, leaving him sitting breathing heavily down below. We returned for a 10 course lunch. Liang insisted on filling my bowl, just laughing when I said no. I had to sit back and refused to eat. Then taken to some Ming tombs which could have been peaceful but he rushed me about pointing and

giggling so no time to relax. He says he is coming with me in the morning but I said NO – only me and the driver. We are going to the Temple of Heavenly Peace which needs peace. Afternoon by the pool French Bertrand turning up and we had a very cold swim. Met up again for dinner where we tested their white wine which was not very good. So to bed.

24th Sept. I am writing this on 25th 2 hours before leaving. Driven to the Temple of Heaven... Coincidence: I am just finishing Erwin Wickert's Middle Earth – a set of essays about China. He was leaving the next day and like me was saying farewell by visiting the same temple. It was very beautiful and I could have sat there for hours but I had to hurry so that the driver could get back for lunch. He had previously complained that I always stayed too long. In the afternoon I went to the forbidden city again. This time it was easier as I said I would get a taxi home. Very enjoyable walk around then off to arts & crafts shop where I bought two beautiful kites. Dinner with an English research student (Manchester, Chemistry). It was his first day and he was pleased I could show him a few things like hotel
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shop. Up to the roof bar where I was horrified to see a cloud. Washed hair and off to bed. I woke at 5.0. Wrote 7 postcards. Looking forward to
Being home. THE END



春風露范杜鵑紅
時在丙寅大暑日
於成都

