

In the afternoon Geoff and I set off as I wanted to sketch the Avon from the bridge at Bidford - Drunken Bidford as Shakespeare called it - to show the overhanging willows, the red tiles of the houses with the fine old church in the background. I, however, found it a more difficult subject than I imagined and so we drove on over the Cotswold from which one feels one can survey the world and onto Chipping Camden which would make an excellent setting for the Pied Piper. Every house in the village, and they are the quaintest, some with arched church doors to the houses, some with stable doors and one with an enormous studded door. They are built of Cotswold stone, a warm friendly stone ranging in colour from buff to a deep milky orange. The market place here in Chipping Camden has been taken over by the National Trust and it looks extremely old. I know that England is steeped in history but this looks one of the oldest places. After tea we walked round the Pied Piper Street and then drove on to Broadway which I have mentioned as a show village of great charm. The houses here are again of Cotswold stone. In one garden we saw a magnolia tree in full flower. Coming in from the Cotswold we parked the car on Down Hill, a National Trust place where one can walk on the lovely springy turf where one can walk with being shut in by hedges and walls. It was Mary who suggested our going there and having the fresh sharp wind in our faces and breathing the pure air of heaven. This walk we want to do again for it is high up on a ridge from where one can see for miles around. In the distance the Malvern Hills looked lovely and there we must go some time. We walked on until we came to a farmhouse from where we retraced our steps and then returned to Chipping Camden for tea. The one thing that spoils walking here is that you are confined to roads and lanes mostly and walking over open country and fields is much more pleasant. On the way back we drove through Honeybowers where during the war RAF bombers were stationed. The buildings, which stretch for miles are still there with their camouflage paint but completely deserted now, not even squatters in occupation. The drome still has its runway in case of future need, but the fields around have been put back to agricultural use.

There seemed to be hundreds of cyclists out, all looking such healthy creatures in shorts and jerseys and apply cheeks. I must say cyclists do seem to enjoy life. We have met them everywhere we have been, a good healthy life for young things. At Stratford we have even seen them leave their bikes by the roadside, walk a while and view interesting spots and then off again. English youths seem to be intensely interested in things historical, or used to be and still are, I hope in spite of the longhaired young men. Maybe they think it takes them back to the days of Henry the eighth and others. They, were too, interested in art, or were, and music too far more so than our young things. Maybe that they have far more opportunities than we have in South Africa. Our young things are a bit apathetic about most things but sport. At the National Art Gallery we saw three sets of students being taken round by their teachers who explained the paintings and went into the lives of the artists.

The church bells have been ringing since continuously for a service at 6-30 and Edith and Mary have gone. It's almost a calling of people to prayer and devotion. I don't have that feeling at home. Why? I am no churchgoer but I love the keenness of these folk and their religion. Our open-air life takes a lot that is real good from us.

25th April 1950. I had a sewing lesson yesterday trying to make a frock for Edith. She bought the 44" bust pattern I cut and sewed, open bodice six piece skirt. Now I find the top does not nearly meet (minus a 6" gap and the skirt is too large. Blast it is all I can say. The only solution will be to make a tucked front (white) to fill the gap. Mary has a Danish machine about 200 years old which I could not manage. We borrowed Mrs Heath's, our neighbour, Singer much more modern, but it only the 100 mark. Age is the great thing in England.

It has snowed/